VITAL COMMONPLACES:

Dickens, Tennyson & Victorian Letters of Condolence

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of nineteenth century forms of grief and mourning, with particular reference to the peculiar pressures of writing to the bereaved, and how these were, or were not, overcome. Although the focus is mainly on the letters of condolence and on the poems of Tennyson, and the novels, journalism and letters of condolence of Dickens, use is also made of letters by the following: Thomas Carlyle, Edward FitzGerald, Benjamin Jowett, Cardinal Newman, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Queen Victoria. Letters of condolence to Henry Hallam after the death of his son, Arthur, (given in appendix from unpublished originals in Christ Church College Library, Oxford), and also letters of condolence to George Eliot, are also studied. Twentieth century psychological studies of bereavement by Freud (*Mourning and Melancholia* [1917]), Eric Lindemann (*Symptomology of Grief,* [1944]) Geoffrey Gorer (*Death and Bereavement in Contemporary Britain* [1965]), and by Colin Murray Parkes (*Bereavement; studies of grief in adult life* [1986]), serve to identify common and universal features of the processes of grief and mourning.

Correspondence about Arthur Hallam's life and death, and about the exhumation of Rossetti's poems, show how the language with which death and grief is treated in letters, is fraught with difficulties. This thesis establishes a link between the language of fiction, poetry and letters, and between the conventions of expressing sympathetic grief in the form of condolences, and Victorian conventions of funerals and mourning, as found in fiction, letters, art criticism, Dickens' journalism, a publication for undertakers, and in the monuments at Highgate Cemetery.

Delineating the fears which faced a condoler, reveals the common awareness that words of comfort can seem useless and empty. It is also seen that in the Victorian age, the conventions of grief and mourning were felt to have separated from the sentiment within. This felt inadequacy had serious implications for the writer of a letter of condolence. This thesis identifies the feeling which many condolers shared: that words of comfort seemed merely commonplace and formalised, and were therefore unable to convey sincerity, or to mark particularity. That writing cannot fully record the modulations of a voice, or convey action, presents a writer of a letter of condolence with a further difficulty. Words already felt to be commonplace or conventional, might seem dead on the page, without voice or gesture.

This thesis delineates the conventions and commonplaces of funerals, of mourning, and of letters of condolence, as a problem which is ever-renewed. Close readings of Tennyson's letters of condolence and of *In Memoriam* are provided, in order to establish how, in particular contrast to Dickens, Tennyson was able to resurrect such commonplaces. A study of *Our Mutual Friend* and of Dickens' letters of condolence shows how, Dickens seeks to deny the anguish of grief. Whereas Dickens is confident and certain about his power to condole and about his views of an after-life, Tennyson is hesitant and reticent. Whereas Dickens seeks to rouse and be heartfelt, Tennyson is cautious.

For Rachel

This thesis is my own work. The views expressed are those of the author and not those of the University.

INTRODUCTION

DEATH IN LIFE

It is impossible to separate the idea of the dead from the companionship of the living.

Charles Dickens'

It is now a commonplace of sociology to observe that death and mourning are treated with much the same prudery as sexual impulses were a century ago.[2] Whereas sex is said to have been the great taboo of the nineteenth century, mourning was very public. In the last half of the twentieth century, however, it is sex which has become public, and now, 'death is the last taboo'.[3] It is true that death has beome an increasingly private event, for today, over seventy per cent of deaths occur in hospital. A hundred and fifty years ago, however, most deaths happened in the home, and it would not have been unusual for the family to have been present at the deathbed. In his history of the changing Western attitudes to dying, *The Hour of Our Death*, Philippe Ariès maintains that the hospitalization of the dying, means that death — 'a phenomenon of nature' — has been 'turned...into an accident of illness which must be brought under control'.[4] This vain attempt to control that which is pre-eminently beyond our control, has meant that compared with the Victorians, the late twentieth century can be said to have lost the arts of dying and mourning.

Since death in hospital was not usual in the Victorian age, it was common for a corpse to remain in the house until the burial some days later. Thus the corpse could become the focus for the bereaved's grief. Corpses were 'laid-out', a ritual which involved the washing of the dead body, the plugging of orifices, the closing of the eyes and the mouth, the straightening of limbs, and the dressing of the body in 'grave clothes'. The bereaved spent the time from death to burial watching the corpse; just as the dying would not be left alone, so the bereaved would not leave the dead. Before the funeral, there was a 'viewing', or the 'last look', a custom which allowed friends and relatives of the deceased to make a respectful visit of condolence. The dead would be touched, sometimes kissed.[5] At a time of intense inner turmoil and outer disorganization, these rituals provided the bereaved with the means by which emotions and events could be structured. Such conventions provided both opportunities and procedures for the bereaved and the condoler to give form to, and thus perhaps express, what Dickens called 'the first sharp moments of bereavement'.[6]

Today, however, death does not have such a familiar or domestic presence. Indeed, death is often reduced to a problem of sanitation. It is quite usual for corpses to be quickly hurried off to cold storage, with the result that the bereaved are suddenly parted from the deceased at an early stage of the process of mourning. By contrast, past rituals of watching and viewing the corpse meant that the bereaved were faced with the physical realities of death which could help to facilitate the realisation

of grief; as Freud observed, part of 'the work of grief...[is] declaring the object to be dead'[7]. Moreover, Victorian conventions of mourning, such as the wearing of crape, widow's weeds, and jet jewellery during the period of mourning, gave the mourner socially agreed forms by which to disclose his or her state or condition, and by which to indicate, through changes in dress, the degree or stage of mourning. As the wearing of mourning precluded certain activities, so the bereaved could only make the transition to a more normal life gradually.[8] Nowadays, however, it is impossible to know at a glance who has been bereaved, and the loss of the convention of a period of mourning means that the bereaved are often hurried through, or denied, the process of mourning. Philippe Ariès has remarked that public expressions of grief have become distasteful; now, 'mourning is a malady...like a contagious disease'.[8] It is now also quite a common occurrence for relatives and friends to avoid meeting the bereaved, or to discourage the bereaved from talking about the deceased, for fear that matters will become embarrassing or distressing for both the condoler and the bereaved. This is not to say that the Victorian conventions of mourning and of offering condolences meant that a condoler could perform his duty without fear, or would know exactly what to say to the bereaved. Such forms, however, would at least make the condoler aware that a bereavement needed to be marked either by saying, or not saying, something.

Compared with those of the Victorian period, today's funeral customs have also suffered a loss. It is no longer common to see

a slow funeral procession, making its way from the house of the deceased, through the streets, to the cemetery. The growing popularity of cremation, moreover, with its scattering of ashes, has rendered gravestones, and thus the custom of visiting the grave, an outmoded practice.[9] By contrast, in the Victorian age, the cemetery and the funeral monument became increasingly important. Section XVIII of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) decides that

> 'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
> Where he in English earth is laid'[10]

Tennyson confirms that there is some certainty and comfort in knowing where precisely the dead are buried. Although the rituals surrounding the corpse's preparation for burial were respected by the bereaved, regardless of social class, only those who were well-to-do could ensure that it was possible to stand by the grave. In *Bleak House*, for instance, Jo reveals to Lady Dedlock that 'they' put her former (and clandestine) lover, Captain Hawdon 'Among them piles of bones, and close to that kitchin winder! They put him wery nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to get it in'.'[11] 'They', 'put', 'stamp' and 'it' convey how the overcrowding and anonymity of London life in the 1830's, had a terrible echo in its burying grounds. At St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, for example, there were between 60,000 and 70,000 bodies buried in an area only 200ft. square.

In response to such scenes of horror, where all that had been of the dead did not vanish, but became horrifically offensive to

the senses, feelings, and even the health of the living, seven privately-owned cemeteries were established around London in the 1830's and 1840's.[12] Only the bereaved who could afford to bury their dead in such places — an ordinary grave at Highgate Cemetery in 1839 cost £2, 10s. — were able to maintain a strong and beautified sense of the deceased. Highgate Cemetery's rural and elevated position away from and above the city, its elaborate and massive tombs, and its picturesque landscapes and sense of repose, allowed the bereaved to develop a feeling of the dead's persisting presence. A large monument lent importance to what might have been a relatively short life (the average age of death of those buried at Highgate Cemetery in 1839, the year of its opening, was 36†. Those who died young would not be forgotten: the massiveness of their tombs, which could be maintained in scrupulous order, and *in perpetuity*, by the servants of the London Cemetery Company, granted them a kind of immortality.

† a figure lowered by the number of deaths in infancy

Sudden and premature death made the Victorian bereaved's need to maintain intimate links with the dead especially strong. On 10 February 1862 (two months after the death of her husband Prince Albert), Queen Victoria wrote to Charles Grey:

> She feels her Darling Husband, very, very near today! But she knows not *where* He is![13]

Although a convention, Queen Victoria's use of the third person when writing about herself, also serves to communicate her sense of alienation. Her yearning and searching goes beyond the place of burial. It is also a yearning for some sense of transcendental

continuity of contact, with what she called, 'the *Life presence* of the Dead'.'[14] In the nineteenth century, spiritualism became increasingly popular; there was a preoccupation with what form the after-life, if indeed there was one, might take. Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, is deeply troubled by the thought that if the after-life is formless, or has a form different from life, then his dead friend would be transformed beyond all recognition afforded by tender memory:

> Thy Spirit ere our fatal loss
> Did ever rise from high to higher;
> As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
> As flies the lighter through the gross.
>
> But thou art turned to something strange,
> And I have lost the links that bound
> Thy changes; here upon the ground,
> No more partaker of thy change.'[15]

In these stanzas from section XLI, the bereaved poet trusts that Hallam's 'Spirit' has risen 'heavenward', and so does not feel 'very, very near'. Indeed, because Hallam's 'Spirit' is where it is, wherever and what ever that might be, what his Spirit has or might have become, also seems distant and strange. Because Hallam's 'Spirit' will 'ever rise from high to higher', it will have 'turned to something strange', with the result that the bereaved poet often has 'A spectral doubt... / That I shall be thy mate no more' (XLI). Tennyson's anxiety, therefore, it could also be said, 'rises from high to higher': from where and what to how. As Tithonus, in a poem written soon after the death of Hallam asks, 'How can my nature longer mix with thine?'. Such a question about the nature of the dead and how the living might feel close to them, strains the imagination to the limit of the world: the

dead Arthur Hallam has been borne 'where I could not see / Nor follow' (XXII). Tennyson is troubled with how he might maintain links with him, both here and in the hereafter.

The Victorian conventions of death and mourning, however, were concerned with maintaining a sense, or a mental picture, of the dead as they had been when 'here upon the ground'. 'Every pleasant spot' where the bereaved and the deceased had been 'wont to meet,/ The field, the chamber and the street' (VIII), became a means of remembering and locating the dead as they had been in life. In the middle-class home, sometimes an alabaster or a plaster model of the family's dead child, represented as though sleeping, was kept under glass in the front room. The belongings of the deceased were often arranged and treasured as mementos, and in some cases, most notably Queen Victoria's after the death of Prince Albert, the death chamber was converted into a kind of 'sacred room'.[16] As well as the wearing of mourning clothes, it became common practice for the bereaved to wear a brooch or ring which contained, or was partly made of, the hair of the dead person. Since more deaths occurred in the home, widows and/or widowers would often sleep in the bed where their spouse had died and had been laid out.[17] In poorer homes, where space was limited, families would have to eat their meals with the coffin containing the dead person laid out on the table in front of them.

The proximity of the dead and the ways in which there was a degree of physical contact with the dead after death, are in marked contrast with today's practices and experience. That the

dying are commonly hospitalised and their corpses are suddenly hurried away from mortuary to crematorium, are emblematic of the twentieth century's attempt to separate death off from life. The changing demography of death — in 1900, 143,000 babies died before they were a year old; now, the figure is 6,000 — means that 'death has become the monopoly of the aged'.[18] For the Victorians, however, death was generally more frequent, sudden and premature, and as a result, it was perhaps seen and felt to be much more of a part of daily life. The conventions of death and mourning, which became particularly elaborate and widespread in the Victorian age, attempted to give a healing form to the arbitrary nature of death. It was important to mark sudden loss in order to counteract the feeling that all had suddenly been swept into the gulf. This was particularly so in the case of sudden and or premature death. Rather than letting the dead person be forgotten, or for it to seem as though he or she had never been, the rituals and conventions of funerals and mourning helped to maintain a link between the living and the dead. Indeed, lead coffins, slow funeral processions, large monuments and the wearing of black, can all be seen as attempts to delay the final departure of the dead from the physical world.[19]

Victorian conventions of death and mourning, then, grew out of, and were intimately related to, a sense of the transience of life and of the thin partition between life and death. Since there was this close correspondence between the dead and the living, between the mourner and the condoler, and between public ceremony and private forms of grief, Tennyson's phrase, 'O Death in Life' (from

his lyric, *Tears, Idle Tears*), can be read as an expression which embodies the spirit of his age. The Victorians' awareness of the nearness of death and their wish to maintain a continued sense of their dead, were not confined to a particular time and place, they also permeated all aspects of the bereaved's life and language.

This thesis is a study of forms of grief and mourning in the nineteenth century, with particular reference to the peculiar pressures involved in writing to the bereaved, and how these were, or were not overcome. In *Death Sentences* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), Garrett Stewart shows how the language with which death is treated in fiction, is fraught with difficulties. The language of letters of condolences is similarly fraught. This thesis establishes a link between the language of fiction, poetry and letters, and between the conventions of expressing sympathetic grief in the form of condolences, and the conventions of funerals and mourning. Although this thesis centres on the poems and letters of Tennyson, and the novels, journalism, and letters of Dickens, a wide diversity of other material is used. Letters to, and by Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, Edward FitzGerald, Benjamin Jowett, Cardinal Newman and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, amongst others.

Chapter I (What Remains) studies the correspondence about Arthur Hallam's life and death, and the attempts by his friends to delineate his character. These, together with Dante Gabriel Rossetti's letters about the exhumation of his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, show how grief, and the ambiguous nature of the dead, can

create striking linguistic ambiguities. The chapter considers how for Tennyson in *In Memoriam*, these ambiguities helped to facilitate his striving to recall and delineate what remains of Hallam, both as he was and as he might continue to be. Chapter II (Dissolution), by contrast, shows how in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens presents, in the false social world of the Veneerings *et al.*, a death in life which is the result of the deadening effects of money. In contrast to *In Memoriam*, Dickens is fascinated by the persistence and dispersal of what remains of the dead — bodies, belongings, and the living's memory of these — on the earth-side of the grave only.

Chapter III (Mere Ceremony) examines other conventions of grief and mourning, as revealed in fiction, letters, art criticism, Dickens' journalism, a publication for undertakers, and in the monuments at Highgate Cemetery. In the nineteeth century, criticisms of Victorian funeral practices became increasingly vociferous; the chief objection being that the outward forms had grown far and away from the sentiment within. This felt inadequacy about conventions had serious implications for those offering condolences. Many condolers felt that words of comfort seemed commonplace and formalised, and were therefore unable to convey sincerity, or to mark the particularity of a loss. In *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (1989), Eric Griffiths demonstrates how writing cannot fully record the modulations of the voice. This can be a particular difficulty for a writer of a letter of condolence, in that his words, already commonplace, might seem dead on the page, without voice or gesture. Chapter IV

(Commonplaces) identifies these losses and shows how Tennyson uses the commonplaces of grief and mourning in a way which revives them, both in his letters of condolence and also in *In Memoriam*.

That the bereaved are isolated by the fact of their loss, means that would-be condolers often do not know when or what to write, for fear of intruding. Chapter V (Hesitating to Approach) examines a condoler's hesitation both in visits and in letters of condolence. Tennyson's particular shyness as a public poet and as a private man, his respect for the privacy of others, provide a context for the particular kind of hesitation in his letters of condolence, in contrast to Dickens' confident assertion.

How the physiological effects of sympathetic grief can disturb a letter writer's powers of expression, is considered in Chapter VI (Vain Words). Words of comfort which already feel commonplace through constant repetition, are also felt to have been rendered empty by the empty feeling of loss. As well as showing how Tennyson attends to and respects these common feelings, this chapter also centres on how Dickens attempts to deny the anguish of bereavement, or to hurry the bereaved on to a time when their anguish has subsided. Chapter VII (Many Blessed Sources of Consolation) continues to contrast Dickens and Tennyson, with regard to what sources of religious consolation they have to offer, about the possible form and existence of an after-life. The difference between Dickens' confidence and certainty, and Tennyson's hesitation about the nature of an after-life, reveals the different purposes of each. Whereas Dickens seeks to be

heartfelt and to rouse his correspondent, Tennyson is reticent and cautious.

Studies of bereavement in the twentieth century by Sigmund Freud, Geoffrey Gorer and Colin Murray Parkes, have all identified common elements in responses to the news of a death of a loved one. In providing a reading of Victorian letters of condolence, the findings of these studies have been employed, together with biographical and historical material, and references to social etiquette. In their *Recovery from Bereavement* (1983) Parkes and Weiss observe that the process of accepting loss in an emotional way

> can be achieved only as a consequence of fine-grained, almost filigree work with memory. It requires what appears to an observer to be a kind of obsessive review in which the widow or widower goes over and over the same thoughts and memories. If the process is going well, they are not quite the same thoughts and memories; there is movement — perhaps slow — from one emphasis to another, from one focus to another.[20]

The process of grief as described here, is also a description of the method of study in this thesis. The same letters of condolence are sometimes returned to and gone over again from different perspectives. Such a method is appropriate to both the process of grief and also to the fact that a condoler often feels that a letter has to perform many different functions at once, such as marking friendship and love, being a proof of tender feeling, enquiring after health, and offering religious comfort. As the bereaved and the condoler are particularly sensitive to words, and to their perceived success or failure, close readings

of letters of condolence are provided. And since the anguish of grief and the difficulties of writing a letter of condolence are ever-renewed, Chapter VIII (Endings) does not attempt to provide a solution to these problems.

I

WHAT REMAINS

After the death of his friend, Hurrel Froude, in 1836, Cardinal Newman expressed 'the sad feeling,,,that one cannot retain on one's memory all one wishes to keep there',[1]

Tennyson told Frederick Locker-Lampson that *Tears, Idle Tears*

> was not real woe...'it was rather the yearning that young people occasionally experience for that which seems to have passed away from them for ever.' That in him it was strongest when he was quite a youth.[2]

'When he was quite a youth', Tennyson was friends with Arthur Hallam, and both shared a sense of nostalgic yearning, which the poem encapsulates. Hallam recognised that 'I am indeed disposed to take dark & apprehensive views of things'.[3] One of the reasons he withdrew his own share of poems, originally intended for publication with Tennyson's in 1830, was that he recognised that they suffered 'in parts morbidness of feeling'.[4] It was his 'long and severe experience of...melancholy sentiments'[5], and his 'fits of gloom'[6] which Hallam's friend, James Spedding, noticed when they first met at Cambridge in the autumn of 1828. Spedding recalled that Hallam

> was subject to occasional fits of mental depression, which gradually grew fewer and fainter, and had at length, I thought, disappeared, or merged in a peaceful Christian faith.[7]

Hallam's depression was caused chiefly by his acute awareness that

life is fleeting. In his essay, *Theodicaea Novissima (1831)*, he observed that the 'moment we call the present...escapes us while we articulate its name'.[8] On 3 July 1828, he wrote to his old Etonian friend, William Gladstone, who was then at Oxford:

> It is my destiny, it would seem, in this world to form no friendship, which when I begin to appreciate it, & hold it dear, is not torn from me by the iron hand of circumstance. The friends whom I loved at Eton I shall not see at Cambridge. Those who endeared to me my sojourn in Italy are scattered to the four winds of heaven — and the chance of enjoying more hours of their conversation, & society is more unstable than the very breath of those winds. For it is in the nature of English society abroad, that its cement is but for a day, & when once its brief hour of existence has passed over such a fabric, the dissolution is as sudden, as it is thorough; and few are the instances in which one stone is left upon another.[9]

This is a Death in Life, as dear friends, far off, are felt to have passed away from him for ever. The depth of loss in this letter might be seen, not as real woe, but rather as an example of Hallam's rhetorical skill, with those whom 'I shall not see at Cambridge', glancing at Hamlet's 'I shall not look upon his like again' (I. ii. 188).[10] Although Hallam's grief has an elegiac air, it also has a real physical heaviness: 'the iron hand of circumstance' has the same force as 'The blows of Death' (XCV), and friends are 'torn' from him violently and irrevocably. Furthermore, society abroad has an unstable, dying breath; friends are 'scattered' and subject to 'dissolution', words which are redolent of a corpse's physical decomposition. In order to compensate for these deaths, Hallam hoped to keep his friends alive in his memory. Unfortunately, this too presented a Death in

Life. The imaginative memory was also unstable and subject to dissolution.

Although Hallam possessed a 'morbidness of feeling' for what is in the natural course of things, that all things will die, he also hoped that this sense was

> an honest regret...which tends to make us better, by constantly <recalling to us> keeping alive within us the fresh & early affections of the heart."

Hallam's deletion of 'recalling to us' serves to reveal the difficulty involved in keeping alive such affections. Whereas 'constantly recalling to us' invokes repetition which secures a constancy of remembrance, 'constantly keeping alive within us' creates a sense of the necessity of having to keep tending the fresh and early affections of the heart, that will, without constant attention, die. As youth passed away into manhood, what was as 'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail', grew fainter, until at length, it suffered a kind of death. On 25 June 1828, two months after he had ended his ten month stay in Italy, Hallam wrote to his friend from Eton and Cambridge, James Gaskell:

> I sink into deep and mournful thoughts of what has for ever gone by; the sweet days of dear Italy, cheered as they were by the calm sunshine of friendship, and the brighter but far more fleeting sunset of love. I try to form a mimic life to my imagination out of that which I knew in its reality. I shut my eyes, and closing as much as possible every avenue to my mind, I compel the phantoms of the past to pass before me in mental light. Again, I ride by *her* along the bank of the Tiber — turn to catch the sunset over St. Peter's — see the Monte Mario with its crown of cypresses, and the Ponte Molle, with each of the roads meeting there, vividly distinct, even to the grips in the path, and the gates of the field — again I enter Torlonia's gaily-lighted rooms — press through

> the crowd, make my way by *her, take my place with her* — view each and all of my friends passing to and fro, grouping together, asking questions — in the ghastly life of the memory! Again I listen to her conversation, trembling on the musical sounds of that voice which fell on my ear [...] All her glances are evoked before me — her look of soft and graceful mirth — her look of heartfelt sympathy — her look of melancholy and alienation from the world — her look of dignified character — of attractive and commanding innocence. Oh, Gaskell, why is it that these last creations of imaginative memory, though by far the most enchanting, are also the least clear? Why do I find a difficulty in presenting her face to the mind's eye, her tones to the mind's ear?[12]

For Hallam, the evanescent nature of life and of the memory created a 'strange mingling of sweet, & bitter',[13] a feeling which is later embodied in Tennyson's *Tears, Idle Tears,* ('So sad, so strange, the days that are no more'). There is a double sense of loss in Hallam's letter: not only have these events 'for ever gone by' in life ('the present...escapes us while we articulate its name'), but there is a second death, as the memory of such events escapes him while he struggles to present it to his mind's eye. Friends and events, indeed, all we love, sink below the verge of day and of the memory. 'The days have vanished tone and tint' (XLIV). Thus, the memory is 'a vasty deep',[14] or an underworld, which becomes inhabited by 'the phantoms of the past'. All the colour and subtlety of Hallam's 'her face...her tones', cannot be conjured or fully realised, for 'in the ghastly life of the memory', the past becomes pale, and thin and spectre-like. This is a Death in Life because people who are still alive have become phantoms both in the past and in the memory. Hallam's 'Oh, Gaskell', is wild with all regret, as it passes from yearning to a sense of real woe. For Hallam, the memory is an imperfect record.

Instead of recalling the living and breathing physical presence of friends, the memory enacts a kind of death.

Hallam's awareness of the difficulty in presenting a face to the mind's eye, becomes, after his death, a particularly poignant difficulty for Tennyson, one which is presented in Section LXX of *In Memoriam*:

> I cannot see the features right,
> When on the gloom I strive to paint
> The face I know; the hues are faint
> And mix with hollow masks of night;
>
> Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
> A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
> A hand that points, and palled shapes
> In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;
>
> And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
> And shoals of puckered faces drive;
> Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
> And lazy lengths on boundless shores;
>
> Till all at once beyond the will,
> I hear a wizard music roll,
> And through a lattice on the soul
> Looks thy fair face and makes it still.[15]

As the bereaved poet falls into that half-conscious state which precedes sleep, his struggle with the act of imaginative memory mixes with 'the emptiness / And horrors of the formless dark'.[16] The 'hollow masks of night' are both a hindrance to the memory and a metaphor for the memory. Whereas Hallam's recollection is, to begin with, 'vividly distinct' ('the phantoms of the past pass before me in mental light'), Tennyson is faced with the yawning enormity of the memory and of the dark. Although Hallam succeeds in 'closing as much as possible every avenue to my mind', Tennyson

is lost 'In shadowy thoroughfares of thought'. 'The hues [of the face I know] are faint', but Hallam's 'usual colour [when alive] was always high'.[17] Tennyson finds that seeing the features right, lies 'beyond the will'. It is only after full sleep has come, and the conscious will has ceased to function, that 'thy fair face' emerges distinctly. That Tennyson has not willed the face to appear — it is not Tennyson, but Hallam's face that looks 'through a lattice on the soul', rather than being compelled to appear 'to the mind's eye' — suggests Hallam's individuality continues to have life, not only in the memory of the bereaved but also in a second state sublime. This sense of his continuity is developed by the fact that Hallam's face visits Tennyson during 'Sleep, Death's twin-brother' (LXVIII), thus evoking the sense that in Death, 'I shall know him when we meet' (XLVII).

In order to compensate for friendship's and the memory's Death in Life, Hallam sought to renew the physical presence of his friends by meeting them frequently. If, however, he was unable to see the face of a friend in the flesh, then he derived the next best comfort from the sight of his handwriting. As he told Gladstone in a letter from Italy, dated 30 October 1827:

> Did you but know the comfort of receiving an English letter! The delight with which it is torn open & perused! The assiduity with which it is read, & almost spelt, over & over again! The deep sigh with which it is at last replaced in the pocket![18]

That the letter is 'almost spelt, over & over again!', can be seen as an attempt by Hallam to realise Gladstone's living presence.

In Tennyson's *Merlin and Vivien*, Merlin tells Vivien that 'still I find / Thy face is practised when I spell the lines'[19] Hallam's 'deep sigh' expresses a double sense: his comfort of having received an English letter is mixed with the recognition that such comfort requires 'assiduity' ('persistent endeavour'), and is only a practice. That the letter 'is at last replaced in the pocket', suggests that it has become a keepsake, which might aid future comfort. On the other hand, 'at last replaced', could be to concede that the letter's comfort is, at last, only temporary. Hallam's exclamation marks, the violence of 'torn open', and the voracious and repetitive nature of his reading, all seek to make the comfort of receiving an English letter known, and to reach beyond the written words, in order to convey the physical nature of his 'delight'. His reading and his writing concentrates him on his own presence and on the imagined presence of his correspondent. Hallam hopes 'that though in body absent, I might walk / With thee in thought and feeling.'[20]

Hallam's need to derive an almost physical comfort from letters was particularly acute with regard to his correspondence with his fiancée, Emily Tennyson. When, in March 1831, Henry Hallam heard that his son had become engaged to Tennyson's sister, he stipulated that Arthur should not go to Somersby, the home of the Tennysons, during his minority. As Arthur Hallam did not come of age until 1 February 1832, this was quite a long time to have to wait. Hallam sought to lessen the bitterness of separation by writing often, assuring Emily Tennyson that his father had given

his 'implied consent' to their corresponding. By writing to her, he hoped to regain a sense of her physical presence:

> It has done me some good, I think, to write these few lines; I am somewhat calmer for it; it is almost as if I heard you speak.[21]

As their enforced separation continued, however, he felt that letters failed to recall her to him, and vice versa. In a letter dated 29 May 1831, he expressed his 'deep regret that I cannot be with you', and continued:

> I feel such a want to throw out my whole heart to you, and yet this cannot be. What are letters! They make me remember delight, and hope for delight, but what are they to one look from your eyes, one tone from your voice! It is impossible we can know each other in absence, as we could, were I near you, and could I say to you all my heart prompts, and of which a pen is a feeble interpreter.[22]

Hallam's letters to Emily Tennyson presented him with a kind of Death in Life because they seemed only to reinforce the fact that she was absent. Her letters were only about the past ('they make me remember') and the future ('and hope...'), and they failed to catch her as she was in the present. In order to compensate for this loss, and as a means of keeping 'fastened the bonds of [a] new, & invincible strength around our hearts', Hallam stressed the importance of '*frequent* writing...full of yourself, instinct with your precious feelings'.[23] '*Frequent* writing' was vital, because a letter could only give an infrequent sense of her presence.

After Hallam's stay with Emily Tennyson at Somersby in March 1832, a few weeks after he came of age, the loss of life implicit in letters becomes even more poignant:

> Thank you, thank you, my darling Nem, for writing. I have devoured every syllable of your letter with eyes & lips; and I I find my appetite grown quite voracious with such sweet food. Yet I feel how wretched it is to be thrown back into the region of letters after treading the giddy heights of existence, in which your dear presence & converse had placed me. Oh it is sad to think how little a letter gives one! Yours today is all precious sweetness; yet it tells but a few moments of your life, a few thoughts of your mind, and it contains no looks, no tones — that is the great, deplorable, alas irremediable loss; but something will be gained by frequent, earnest intercourse of letters.[24]

Her letter is more than 'almost spelt out'. Hallam has 'devoured every syllable...with eyes & lips'. Her words become his as he consumes them, by reading them to himself, by reading them aloud to himself, and possibly, by actually kissing the words. Even so, a letter only gives a little of what his eyes and lips desire to devour. Her words have suffered a Death in Life because they embody the fact that both she and he are 'in body absent'. Her letter 'contains no looks, no tones' and so, although it gives him some temporary satisfaction, he is still starved of her real life-giving living presence. The sight of her handwriting and her letters 'filled me with comfort & a strange melancholy joy'.[25]

When Hallam made his last fatal tour in Europe in 1833, the loss of life in letters was made more acute. The loss of her 'dear presence & converse' was made more intense by the greater

distance between them, and by Hallam's feeling that a pen is a feeble interpreter of his feelings, sensations, thoughts and experiences. Hallam's letters from Europe to her a month before his death are breathless and little more than sketches in words. In one letter he conveys 'the torrent rushing beneath me' in a sentence over 120 words long, in which dashes mingle together 'the day...my spirits...— the torrent... — the ragged green... — the pines... — the waterfall...the voices of eternal hills'.[26] Even when he resorted actually to sketching, Hallam felt that he could not do justice to the scene, telling Emily Tennyson 'I fear you will get little good from it'.[27] Because 'the good' which Hallam wishes her to get is to make her feel the physical reality of what he is experiencing on his travels, Hallam began to collect souvenirs for her. At King's Lake, he 'picked up a stone, wet with the spray, which I destine for your workbox' (24 August),[28] and at the Salt Mines at Hallein, he 'broke off a bit for you' (30 August).[29] By bringing home part of what he has seen, Hallam attempts to provide himself with physical evidence which might endure, even though the wetness of the spray is especially fleeting, and the bit of salt was 'unluckily lost'. Unlike his words, such mementos might go some way to preserve and also to help to revive the passing occasion and the fleeting nature of memory. They might also help Emily to share the reality of what he had seen, making her feel that she had been there too, that she was in Arthur's mind when he picked up these things. That Hallam sought to compensate the inadequacy of letters with physical souvenirs, shows how writing which was once 'full of yourself',

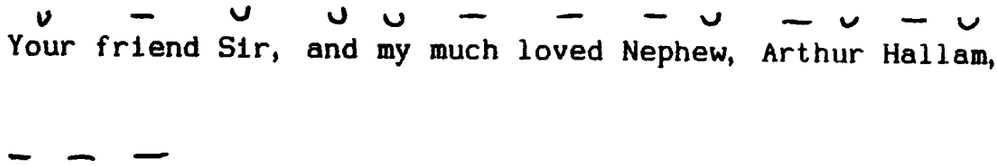
can be felt to have become empty ('it contains no looks, no tones'), and therefore provides only inadequate evidences of, or only a faint notion of, an actual physical presence.

Hallam's feeling that letters suffered the removal of a living presence became a terrible reality when on 1 October 1833, a letter arrived at Somersby from Clifton, addressed 'to Alfred Tennyson Esqre; if Absent, to be opened by Mrs Tennyson'. The letter was from Arthur Hallam's uncle, Sir Henry Elton:

> My dear Sir,
> At the desire of a most afflicted family, I write to you, because they are unequal, from the Abyss of grief into which they have fallen, to do it themselves.
> Your friend Sir, and my much loved nephew, Arthur Hallam, is no more — it has pleased God to remove him from this his first scene of Existence, to that better World, for which he was created.
> He died in Vienna on his return from Buda, by Apoplexy, and I believe his Remains come by Sea from Trieste.
> Mr. Hallam arrived this Morning in 3 Princes Buildings.[30]

The expression 'is no more' is a common form when making known a loss. In 1827, Arthur Hallam wrote to W. W. Farr to inform him that: 'The Duke of York, the prop of the Ultra-Protestants, & foe to Catholic liberties is no more:...'.[31] Elton's use of the form, 'is no more', is accomplished. 'Abyss of grief' and 'fallen' prepares the ground for the vertiginous impact or physical shock of 'is no more', in which the sense is plunged into the shock, numbness and disbelief which follows the first response to the news of the death of a loved one.[32] The phrasing of his second sentence, in which his commas create a sense of reluctance, prepares the reader for the full rhythmical import of

'is no more'. Scanning the sentence reveals his carefully weighted approach:



The progress of 3, 6, 4, 3 syllables with its corresponding 2, 3, 2, 3 stresses, in which 'Your friend' is balanced with 'my much loved Nephew', attempts both to delay and to prepare for the shock which is to come. For Elton, Tennyson and indeed Hallam, 'is no more' is too final, if death is not the end of existence. And so, instead of emphasising the phrase's finality with the cruel imitation of a full stop, the dash after 'is no more —' means that the eye and the sense is not brought to a final rest. Instead, because the dash is, in effect, a flattened full stop, or the equivalent of a slur or tie in music, 'no more' is made to run into the infinity of God so that the newly dead do not have a definite end — the dash represents their passage from this world to the next — as the dash links together 'this his first scene' with 'that better World' where Hallam continues to have an 'Existence'. The balance between 'this' and 'that' reaches for the poise of a calm faith, as it suggests that there is a correspondence between death and life.

On reading of Hallam's death 'Very suddenly on the 15th at Vienna',[33] — 'a blood vessel in the brain had suddenly burst'[34] —

Tennyson 'suddenly left the room'.[35]

Section VII of *In Memoriam* gives a ghastly specificity to the severe and painful shock brought on by the impact of 'no more':

> Dark house, by which once more I stand
> Here in the long unlovely street,
> Doors where my heart was used to beat
> So quickly, waiting for a hand,
>
> A hand that can be clasped no more —
> Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
> And like a guilty thing I creep
> At earliest morning to the door.
>
> He is not here; but far away
> The noise of life begins again,
> And ghastly through the drizzling rain
> On the bald street breaks the blank day.[36]

If it were not for its unlovely surroundings, 'once more' and 'waiting' might cause the heart to beat faster with the hope that a personal intimacy with Hallam which is past, might be about to be recovered. The repetition which actually occurs, however, in the form of 'a hand', is actually experienced as a removal. The first hand (line 4) is thought of in the context of the concrete nouns of the first stanza: 'house', 'street', 'doors', 'heart'. Such apparent confidence, however, is called into doubt by the gloom cast by 'dark' and 'unlovely'. The break in mid-sentence between stanzas makes the eye drop onto the particular detail of a hand, which reaches across from one stanza to the next. The repetition of 'hand' from line 4 to line 5 seems to be a confirmation of its substance. The heart skips a beat as 'a hand' *can* be clasped, at least for the duration of three iambic feet.

'No more —', however, suddenly denies the possibility of 'once more'. The hope that has just been raised 'so quickly' is now defeated.

The dash at the end of 'no more —' is both the omission of words or letters, as well as a break or a pause, and it marks the debilitating fall into the Abyss of grief. The dash seems to act with the force of a verb: 'to strike with violence so as to break into fragments' (OED, 1). The realisation that a hope and a life has been cancelled out, means that the dash, as in Elton's dash after 'is no more —', represents the shock of loss, in which composure is broken, and as a result, language is momentarily suspended. (Elton remarked that Hallam's most afflicted family 'are in too great distress, to enter into details').

This second 'hand' (line 5) has, in fact, become 'ghastly' — 'like a spectre [the ghost of Hamlet's father 'started like a guilty thing' (I. 1. 148) or a dead body (*OED*) — and is dropped with the 'ghastly' sense of what this hand has now become. It has been turned to something strange, and can be clasped no more because it now belongs to a corpse and to a spirit. Two of the nouns in the second stanza have also undergone a similar removal of strength and confidence; the insubstantial nature of 'thing' pervades an 'I' that now 'cannot', and which has shrunk into the guilt of 'I creep'. Even Tennyson's revision of this section embodies this process of loss. Line 4 originally began as 'In expectation of his hand' (H.Lpr.104); this was changed to, 'So

quickly waiting for the hand' (2nd reading), and ended in the line as printed. The reduction of the hand from 'his' to 'the' to 'a' echoes the loss of the hand's substance, as well as the loss of a sense of the personal intimacy which accompanied it.

Arthur Hallam's sense of Death in Life did not end with his actual death in Vienna, on 15 September 1833, aged 22. His sense of Death in Life was not confined to himself, it also permeated the lives of his friends. In fact, Hallam's actual death seemed to confirm his feeling that friendship had but a brief existence. The sudden and thorough dissolution which Hallam felt his friendships with others had suffered, was then suffered by his friends, with the terrible suddenness of his removal. Hallam's sense of his friends' dissolution became their grief at his actual dissolution. As one of his Cambridge friends, Robert Monteith, observed, Arthur Hallam 'was so much a centre round which we moved that there now seems a possibility of many connections being all but dissolved'.[37] That Hallam was 'suddenly torn'[38] from his family and friends, gives a terrible force to his own sense that friendships were soon 'torn...by the iron hand of circumstance'. With Hallam's death, 'all [was] swept at once in the gulf, with such a fearful rapidity', Gladstone wrote to James Gaskell (who it will be remembered was a mutual Etonian friend who had also been at Cambridge with Hallam).[39] The friends whom Hallam had loved, and who had loved him, at Eton and at Cambridge, felt that they would not see his like again. He was generally regarded as 'the most charming and the most promising' of his contemporaries.[40]

These qualities led to a wish to commemorate him. Writing to Tennyson on 7 February 1834, Henry Hallam expressed his desire 'to have the character of his [son's] mind, his favourite studies & pursuits, his habits delineated'.[41] In the attempts of Hallam's friends to provide a sketch in words, they encountered Hallam's own sense of Death in Life.

Hallam had a sense of 'the wavering form of the present'[42]. After his death, it is this nature of the present which meant that Hallam's life and character were difficult to capture. Spedding recognised that

> the displays of his gifts and graces were not for show; they sprang naturally out of the passing occasion, and being separated from it, would lose their life and meaning.[43]

Hallam's death meant that his gifts and graces actually had lost their life and meaning. Spedding realises that to describe these qualities out of context would be like a second death, repeating on a smaller scale the larger separation which had taken place at Hallam's physical death. Spedding's reference to 'the passing occasion' though, recalls Hallam's own feeling that the present is that 'moment...which escapes us while we articulate its name'. Even before Hallam's gifts and graces suffered the final separation of death, they were suffering the Death in Life which takes place in the present. How he lived, and what he was, escaped the definition of his friends even while they attempted to articulate these aspects of his life and character. Their difficulty was not only caused by the fact that life is made up of

passing occasions, but also by Hallam's particular gifts and graces. As Spedding observed, Hallam 'had a genius for metaphysical analysis [...] He read, thought, and composed with great rapidity [...] His own theories he was constantly changing and modifying'.[44] Paradoxically, Hallam's 'always active' mind, and his 'energy and quickness of apprehension', made these qualities especially difficult to define.[45] Spedding's 'sprang' and 'constantly changing and modifying', only hint at this mercurial aspect of Hallam's character.

It seems, therefore, that even before his death, there was something rather elusive and otherworldly about Arthur Hallam. Spedding makes reference to his 'mighty spirit';[46] Arthur Hallam's sister, Ellen, remembered his 'angelic spirit',[47] and Henry Hallam felt that Arthur 'seemed to tread the earth as a spirit from some better world'.[48] Again, in Hallam's death, there is a confirmation of this ghostly quality of his life and character. In letters to mutual Etonian friends, Francis Doyle and T. G. Sang, on 8th October 1833, Gladstone felt that the concluding part of *The Tempest*, 'is a dirge for Hallam', and this seems apposite, if he was thinking of the Epilogue spoken by Prospero ('Now I want / Spirits to enforce'), or indeed of his earlier speech, 'Our revels now are ended: these our actors / ...were all spirits, and / Are melted into air, into thin air...' (IV. i. 148-50).[49] Indeed, Prospero's next few lines ('The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces / The solemn temples ... / ... shall dissolve') resonate with how, to one Cambridge friend (Henry Alford), the

death of Hallam was 'a loud and terrible stroke from the reality of things upon the faery building of our youth'.[50] Ariel's song about Ferdinand's father — 'Nothing of him which doth fade, / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange' (i. ii. 400-2), underlies section XL of *In Memoriam*: 'But thou art turned to something strange'. Tennyson's and Hallam's youthful yearning 'for that which seems to have passed away...for ever', passes into real woe with the actual passing away of Arthur Hallam.

After Arthur Hallam's death, his sister, Ellen, wrote in her private journal:

> I have some inexpressibly dear recollections — the dream of Italy — evenings at Malvern & Forest House — German readings with Arthur — sweet conversation in the ensuing winter — one Sunday in particular when he opened his heart to me — the parting between us when he returned to Cambridge — the pressure of his hand which I can almost feel now & which made my heart beat with mingled emotions of joy and agony — the reception of his first letter after this — walks at Hastings — walks & conversations at Tunbridge — all these flit before me [...] It is no dream that I had once a brother whose eye & voice revealed to me the angelic spirit within — the deep feeling impassioned soul — though passed away, his memory lives within me...[51]

The hasty nature of her list, together with its rapid punctuation, not only suggests the 'energy and quickness' of her brother's character, it also expresses her attempt to catch hold of her fleeting memory of her brother's fleeting presence and make it present. That her memory suffers a loss of her brother's physical presence is another re-enactment of his death, and yet Arthur Hallam's own sense that the memory is subject to a kind of

Death in Life, 'lives within' the fleeting nature of her recollections. Because her recollections 'flit', she has the sad feeling that she cannot retain in her memory all that she wishes to keep there. And yet, within her word 'flit', her brother's sad feeling for the 'fleeting sunset of love...[and] the phantoms of the past', has a continued life. Thus, her recollections are quick with a tension between what her brother was, and the feeling that he still is. This tension is embodied in the juxtaposition of the past and the present tense in 'though passed away, his memory lives within me'. The present tense of 'lives', asserts that Arthur Hallam has a continued existence in her memory.

The memory, however, as Hallam had bemoaned, has 'a ghastly life': 'year by year our memory fades' (C). On 9 December 1833, Ellen Hallam wrote a letter to Emily Tennyson, in which she sought to secure her recollections by securing physical evidences:

> My dearest Emily, you will, I am sure allow us to keep the locket, which he always wore, a glove, a lock of hair, and other little memorials which were so very precious to him. [52]

The locket, glove and lock of hair originally belonged to Emily Tennyson, and were given to Hallam by her, as memorials of her. In a strict sense, then, these memorials should be returned to her, but Ellen Hallam wishes to retain them, feeling that what had been memorials of Emily Tennyson might now be memorials of Arthur Hallam and of his love for his fiancée. What was so very precious to him, has become so very precious to her. The locket had had a close and constant contact with Hallam's body, and

would, together with other little memorials, serve as intimate reminders of his physical presence, as it was both in public and in private. Some of these memorials might have retained Hallam's bodily scent, and so a sense of his presence could have been momentarily recalled by activating the memory of smell, sight and touch. Although these are consoling signs, as with Arthur Hallam's feeling about Emily Tennyson's letters to him, they carry within them a sense of loss and absence: the locket was close to a heart that can 'beat no more' (XIX), his love for the hand that filled the glove is now no more. The realisation of this elaborate situation comes upon her slowly. 'Other little memorials' spares both her and Emily the pain of recalling him further; of having to search through his belongings only to find that he is no longer with them.

This sense of defeat and of the removal of a living presence was also felt by those friends who did write memoirs for the privately printed *Remains in Verse and Prose of Arthur Henry Hallam* (1834). Feeling that they could not convey an adequate sense of what it was to be in Hallam's presence, his friends turned to his writings in the hope that these other kinds of physical remains would reveal what he had been. Francis Doyle expressed what was a general sense of disappointment when he told Henry Hallam that

> I feel that nothing he has left behind him quite does him justice for the very reason that his mind was more original & powerful than the minds of us his contemporaries.[63]

'Nothing he has left behind him' refers both to Hallam's essays

and also to his contemporaries. Both have been rendered inactive by his death. Since the bereaved did not have the same quality of mind that Hallam had, they would forever be incapable of doing justice to the expression of this quality. James Spedding owned that 'My own mind lagged so far behind his, that I can be no fit judge of his career'.[54] Only a mind like Hallam's could have judged itself. That it did not, means that his writings are not an unalloyed source of consolation. Instead, they embody the bereaved's sense of defeated promise, and at the same time, they also feel curiously empty of life. Spedding felt that

> the compositions which he has left (marvellous as they are), are inadequate evidences of his actual power, except to those who had watched the workings of his mind, and seen that his mighty spirit (beautiful and powerful as it had already grown), yet bore all the marks of youth, and growth, and ripening promise.[55]

The consolation which Spedding feels in finding that some of Hallam's qualities have been preserved, is almost immediately disappointed by the awareness of how much more of him was irremediably lost. Spedding's sentence mixes the sweetness of hope with the bitterness of separation, as an expectation that a full sense of Hallam is about to be recovered is raised, and then removed. Hallam's compositions disappoint; they contain 'no looks, no tones'. Their loss of a sense of his physical presence is now a re-enactment of the actual loss of his physical presence which occurred at his death.

That Hallam's friends felt that their words were 'inadequate evidences', was pointed up by the very gifts and graces which they were attempting to delineate. Hallam's 'peculiar clearness of perception', is set against James Spedding's perception that he could only give a 'a faint notion of how he [Hallam] lived and what he was'.[56] Spedding's remembrance of Hallam's 'natural skill in the dazzling fence of rhetoric', is followed by his shame at 'how little I have been able to say of such a man'.[57]The weakness that his friends felt in their powers of expression were made more acute by the universally praised configuration they were trying to describe, namely, Hallam's 'intellectual powers'.[58] It is ironic that these 'mental powers' were also brought into cruel relief by Hallam's autopsy, which

> showed a weakness of the cerebral vessels, and a want of sufficient energy in the heart.[59]

Although the autopsy involved an 'examination', in contrast with the 'sketch' which Hallam's friends attempted, yet both kinds of post mortem share the same kind of language. That the autopsy noted 'a want of sufficient energy in the heart' mingles both with Tennyson's heartfelt feeling that in his attempt to draw up a memoir of his friend, he had been 'found most deficient',[60] and also with Gaskell's admission that his sketch was marked by 'insufficiency'.[61] That Hallam's autopsy 'showed a weakness of the cerebral vessels', mingles with Tennyson's sense that his powers of description had failed him and that he felt 'somewhat ashamed at my own weakness'.[62] A word, such as 'weakness', then,

applies both to the causes of failure in the living and the bodily failures that led to Hallam's death. What appears to be just impersonal medical observation is in fact touched by, and touches, the language of personal recollection. Although his friends felt their words could not 'draw him home to those that mourn' (IX), yet the felicitous ambiguities of language do have the unintentional effect of keeping a sense of him present.

That Hallam's physical presence as it was in death pervades the words of his bereaved friends, can be most clearly delineated in the word 'remains', which refers both to the body of a writer's written work and also to his body. While one 'mortal part of our dearest Arthur' was being prepared for its interment, another mortal part, in the form of his poems and prose papers, was being collected for possible publication.[63] Letters discussing both of these activities sometimes crossed one another in the post. While Henry Hallam was concerned with the safe arrival of his son's body, his friends began to ensure the safety of the body of his written work. The same kinds of treatment were afforded to both types of physical remains. Both received the same kinds of respect, and both underwent a process of embalming in which they were preserved from decay and oblivion, and endued with a balmy fragrance.

To begin with Hallam's corpse. Embalming was the only safe way that it could be conveyed from Vienna to Clevedon. Those parts which otherwise would putrefy and so cause offence were removed

and kept away from the main body in separate cases or vessels. These 'very great precautions', as Sir Arthur Hallam Elton was later to refer to them, together with the heavy amount of lead used for the coffin, meant that the funeral procession had by necessity, as well as out of a sense of decorum, to make a slow and ponderous journey from Dover to Clevedon.[64] The living and the dead received the same treatment. The same number of horses were required to move the hearse as each of the three mourning coaches which followed it. 'The coffin was carried in every night where they stopped'.[65]

It is common for the bereaved to find it difficult to accept the reality of a death. A funeral confirms and reinforces the physical fact of a death, and assists in the acknowledgement and expression of grief. Parkes records how

> for several widows it was the funeral service which 'brought home' the reality of what had happened.[66]

That Hallam's funeral was delayed by nearly four months while his body was brought home, with the slow and revitalised impact of that commonplace, prolonged Henry Hallam's sense of disbelief. Although he knew his son was dead, Henry Hallam awaited the safe arrival of the ship from Trieste as if it were carrying more than just his son's remains. Moreover, to have lost the ship would have meant losing Arthur for a second and final time. In anxiously waiting for the physical confirmation of his Arthur's death, and so the realization and mitigation of his own grief,

Henry Hallam was in a disturbed state of mind. Parkes has recorded how the bereaved's preoccupation with the deceased often means that it is difficult for the bereaved to speak of, or to think about, anything else. In Henry Hallam's case, his preoccupation with the safety of his son's remains (there were sea storms in November 1833), results in a kind of distressed sense, whereby his thoughts about the dead permeate all others.

On 9 December 1833, Henry Hallam wrote to Tennyson:

> I have been informed that you expressed a wish to attend our dear Arthur's funeral. If that is the case, I have a place for you in my carriage; it is to be in Clevedon in Somersetshire.
> I have yet no tidings that the ship has sailed from Trieste, [though] probably that is the case before [this] time. There is little reason to suppose that the case arrive before the second week in January.[67]

The delayed arrival of Arthur Hallam's body is felt in the way that the information about the location of the funeral is delayed until the end of the first paragraph. All — Tennyson's future place at the funeral and in the carriage, and indeed the whole funeral — is dependent upon the safe arrival of Arthur Hallam's body. Henry Hallam's anxiety about its precise location makes itself felt in the way that 'the case' keeps making a reappearance in a transfigured form. The commonplace, 'that is the case', becomes insistent and panicky as it takes on a new and terribly appropriate meaning, for the whole case which is under discussion, is if '*the* case' will arrive safely.

This case is 'a box or chest with its proper contents' (OED, 7), and it therefore refers both to Hallam's coffin and its contents, that is, his corpse. The case also refers to Hallam's corpse in another way because a further definition of case is, 'the body (as enclosing the soul), or the exterior (of a man)' (OED, 3). Travelling with Hallam's corpse was another case, the square iron box which contained Hallam's heart and lungs, or possibly, viscera, which had been removed, in order to allow for the safe removal of the body to England. So it is that the case is constantly being altered. There is a flickering of the eye and the sense as the different meanings of the case alternate and overlap one another. Hallam's corpse is always being uncovered and kept in view as well as in mind. This is not the only case in which the coffin and the corpse become merged. On 30 December, 1833, Henry Hallam wrote to Tennyson, because he feared that he

> may have been apprehensive about the safety of the vessel[68]

The word 'vessel' can be applied not only to the ship, but also to Hallam's coffin and to Hallam's body. It is, moreover, a reminder of another vessel, Hallam's heart, which had been removed and made safe in another way, by the process of embalming, and was now being stored in yet another kind of vessel (the square iron box). These vessels combine and are incorporated into his *Remains*: it will be remembered that Hallam's death was caused by 'a weakness of the cerebral vessels'. It is hoped that the vessel that is the ship will not share this quality.

And so, to sum up: the ship contains the case; the case contains the corpse; the corpse is a case, the case contains Hallam's internal organs...the vessel (the ship) contains the vessel (Hallam's coffin) which contains the vessel (Hallam's body); and it also contains the vessel (the square iron box) which contains a vessel (Hallam's heart). The changes in meaning which the words 'case', 'vessel', and 'safety' have undergone, echo the changes which have been wrought on Hallam's body by its embalming. The dense layering of meanings which have been built up correspond to the layers of coffins which would have surrounded his body.

With respect to his literary remains, Gladstone hoped

> that some part of what Hallam has written may be [...] put into a more durable form [...] His letters I think are worthy of permanent preservation.[69]

Here, 'some part' and 'preservation' suggest that another kind of embalming occurs. Before his death, Arthur Hallam too had hoped for 'the eternity of Print'.[70] Henry Hallam, however, was not certain of the propriety of such a measure. He did not include any letters in the *Remains* and deemed many of Arthur's short poems

> unfit even for the limited circulation they might obtain on account of their unveiling more of emotion than, consistently with what is due to him and to others, could be exposed to view.[71]

'Unveiling' and 'exposed to view', suggest that Hallam has conflated his son's corpse with the body of his writing. It would be most unseemly for, either Hallam's remains, or his

Remains, to be exhibited without the removal of those parts which might cause offence. Henry Hallam was therefore 'very cautious about printing any thing that may too much reveal the secrets of his heart ('emotion'). In the same way that only family and friends may view the body or attend the funeral, so the *Remains* were originally printed privately. It is difficult to resist the drawing together of the dead and the living when even the autopsy's reference to Hallam's 'circulatory system' has an echo in the 'limited circulation' of Hallam's *Remains*.[72]

Another occasion when the ambiguity of the word 'remains' draws together the body of a writer's work and the body of a writer, can be delineated in the history of Byron's memoirs. Discussions about whether these should be preserved or destroyed took place at the same time as Byron's embalmed body was being transported from Greece to Gravesend.[73] Byron's friend, Thomas Moore, insisted that it would be an injustice to Byron's memory,

> to condemn the work wholly, and without even opening it, as if it were a pest bag; that every object might be gained by our perusing and examining it together [...] and, rejecting all that could wound the feelings of a single individual, but preserving what was innoxious and creditable to Lord Byron.[74]

It is not too surprising that a proposal couched in the language of the anatomist and the embalmer caused Byron's other friends, John Cam Hobhouse and John Murray, great alarm. Again, there is a merging of 'the work' with the body, indeed, the language used by Moore to describe Byron's posthumous papers vividly recalls all the processes which his body had undergone after his death: both

the autopsy ('opening...perusing and examining'), possible putrefaction ('pest bag'), and the embalming ('rejecting all that could wound...preserving'). In the same way that Hobhouse could not bring himself to open and read the supposedly offending manuscript, so when he boarded the ship which carried Byron's body, he felt that he

> could hardly bear to look at them [Byron's servants and three of his dogs]. The remains were below — I could not bring myself to see where they were placed.[75]

Burning the Memoirs in a kind of funeral pyre would avoid having to encounter obnoxious sights which might horrify and spoil the memory.

Later when the body was lying in state, Hobhouse managed to enter the room, although not on his own,

> & drawn by an irresistible inclination — though I expected to be overcome by it — approached the coffin — I drew nearer by degrees — till I caught a view of the face — it did not bear the slightest resemblance to my dear friend — [...] — his skin was like dull yellow parchment — So complete was the change that I was not affected as I thought I should be — It did not seem to be Byron — I was not moved so much scarcely as at the sight of his hand writing or any thing that I knew to be his —[76]

In the same way that Hobhouse did not wish to show the altered face of Byron to an artist, so he did not want to print anything which might render Byron's name eternally infamous. Byron's body had been distorted in a way which made it unrecognizable; Hobhouse wanted to ensure that the same did not happen to Byron's memory if his memoirs were made public. This drawing together of

physical and literary remains occurs in Hobhouse's simile, 'his skin was like dull yellow parchment'.

With the retrieval of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems in 1869, the unintentional mingling of skin with paper becomes a literal and unavoidable fact. When Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti's wife, died of a laudanum overdose in 1862, Rossetti, hoping that she was only in a trance, delayed the burial and would not allow her coffin to be removed from the house. After four days, there is an easily perceptible 'escape of deleterious gas from the mouth and nostrils' of a corpse.[77] After six days, Rossetti accepted the inevitable and before the lid of Siddal's coffin was fastened down, he placed a Bible and the only manuscript of a collection of new poems next to Siddal's cheek (bound in rough grey calf and with red edges to the leaves), amongst her long auburn hair. Both body and book were then buried in the family grave at Highgate Cemetery.

Seven years later, Rossetti decided to have the poems retrieved in the only way possible. He sought an exhumation order. For £22, and with his friend and literary agent, Charles Howell in attendance, Rossetti had his wife's grave re-opened. When the lid of Siddal's coffin was removed, on the night of October 5 1869, her auburn hair appeared to have retained its colour. By the light of the fire which had been lit to ward off infection, Siddal's long golden tresses filled the coffin in a most Pre-Raphaelite way, and were seen to glow, 'undimmed in death'.[78]

Rossetti's poems were 'a sad wreck', for they had been 'soaked through and through' by the *fetid sanies*, or aqueous part, of Siddal's decomposing body. Once the papers had been dried out and disinfected, however, Rossetti was able to work on them and they were published in 1870, under the title of *Poems*.

On 13 October 1869, a week after the exhumation, Rossetti wrote to his brother, William. In a way which glances at Macbeth's 'I have done the deed' after the murder of Duncan, Rossetti announced that 'the thing is done':

> I have begged Howell to hold his tongue for the future, but if he does not I cannot help it. The only further persons to whom I mean to mention it are Brown and Swinburne. If you see the latter before I do, and you care to speak of it, of course I have no objection. To others I shall say at present I have made the rough copies more available than I hoped; but I suppose the truth must ooze out in time.[79]

'Ooze out in time' recalls the very action of gradual putrefaction — 'the flow of matter' — which Siddal's body had undergone, and the sight of which Rossetti had hoped to avoid by remaining in Scotland while their exhumation took place.[80] There is something ghoulishly intentional about 'ooze out'. Having asked Howell to 'hold his tongue', Rossetti seems to have allowed his own to enjoy a slip. Although his macabre use of 'ooze out' can be seen as an intentional effort to regain control of the details of the exhumation, elsewhere his sense of guilt and unease about the whole matter does 'ooze out' unintentionally into his language.

Rossetti employs euphemisms in order to distance himself from the truth of Siddal's physical condition and his sense of guilt about what he referred to as 'a ghastly business'. In letters to Howell before the exhumation, Rossetti does not name Elizabeth Siddal. Instead, he refers to 'the grave' and 'the burial in question'. Although he attempts to keep his attention fixed upon 'the book in question', the similarity of these expressions reveals the futility of his attempt to keep death and life, the fluids from the body and the paper of the book, entirely separate. A letter to Howell, dated 16 August 1869, reveals how his 'very grave cause for apprehension' about the state of the book and the body in the grave, permeates his language:

> I should have to beg *absolute* secrecy to *everyone*, as the matter ought really not to be talked about [...] I am just at this moment leaving for Scotland —, so perhaps you think it best to defer the matter till my return, especially as you are probably on the move yourself. If however you think it can be done now, so much the better. It is a matter on which — having been lately taking up my old M.S.S. — I begin to feel some real anxiety[81]

Rossetti's anxiety is felt in the way that he keeps dwelling upon 'the matter'. Ten days later, on 26 August, he wrote to Howell telling him that 'The matter occupies my mind'.[82] In another letter, dated 3 September, Rossetti referred again to 'that other matter...'.[83] Although he uses 'the matter' as an euphemism for the ghastly business of recovering his poems — as he told his brother, 'I am...very glad that you view the matter on which I wrote as I do'[84] —, yet the word 'matter' also carries with it its other strikingly appropriate senses: the 'fluids of the body',

and a 'purulent discharge' (OED, 4), what Loudon referred to as 'the flow of matter'.[85] Thus, when, after the poems had been disinterred, Rossetti recalled that his decision to recover them had been made when 'Howell of his own accord entered in on the matter', takes on a particularly literal sense.[86]

And so, although Rossetti thinks that by using the euphemism 'the matter', he can avoid getting into unpleasant details, yet his very words bring him unintentionally into contact with the ghastly truth. 'The matter' actually mingles together the very different kinds of matter which Rossetti thought he could keep separate: namely, the matter, or 'substance' of his poems, 'the painful matter' of having them dug up, the dead matter of Siddal's remains, and its matter, or 'discharge'. Rossetti's attempt to treat the matter of retrieval, as a matter of literary business, denies the link between the living and the dead, in which the mingling of the body with the book, and vice versa, can be seen as an analogy for the way in which life merges into death, and vice versa. Moreover, the fact that Rossetti's words have the effect of uniting the dead and living, again points to the difficulty of trying to confine, or coffin, language, so that it only refers to the dead, or to the living.

After the exhumation, Rossetti admitted that 'I have undergone much mental disturbance about this matter'.[87] Although by lifting the book out of the coffin it could be removed from its seven-year-long contact with Siddal's body, yet in a chemical sense, an

intimate contact would always remain. The book had been altered, by its having been 'soaked through and through' with the fluids from Siddal's body, although Rossetti does not mention this.[88] She was now more than just the subject of some of these poems; she had now become incorporated into the very body of the manuscript. Moreover, the book had not only become imbued with the fluids of a corpse, but it went on to receive the same kind of treatment as a corpse. It was put 'in the hands of a medical man' and then had its appearance restored by Rossetti, in much the same way as an undertaker might have to in order to prepare the features of the dead before the corpse can be viewed. Although Rossetti found the poems 'in a disappointing state', he felt that he had the power to perform something of a resurrection.[89] He told William Rossetti that he thought it would be possible, 'with a little writing and a good memory and the rough copies I already have, to re-establish the whole in a perfect state.'[90]

That the divisions between the body and the book had become blurred, is unintentionally but appropriately paralleled in the indistinctness of Rossetti's explanation to his brother:

> All in the coffin was found quite perfect; but the book, though not in any way destroyed, is soaked through and through, and had to be still further saturated with disinfectants. It is now in the hands of the medical man who was associated with Howell in the disinterment, and who is carefully drying it leaf by leaf.[91]

What Rossetti means by 'all in the coffin was found quite perfect' is not distinct. It cannot just refer to Siddal's body, 'all' must also refer to the book of poems, as this also was in the

coffin. And yet, neither the book nor the body are 'quite perfect', in the sense of that which is 'free from any flaw or imperfection of quality' (OED, 4). Only Siddal's hair could be thus described. Loudon observed that in strong clayey soil (upon which Highgate Cemetery is built), 'decomposition does not take place for a very long period, the fleshy parts of the bodies being changed into adipocere' ('a greyish white fatty or saponaceous substance' OED).[92] It was these fluids which made the book far from perfect, especially as a further sense of 'perfect' is 'unmixed', or 'unalloyed'. Again, the very words which Rossetti has used to try and deny the condition of both the body and the book, unintentionally draw him close to, and reveal the truth of, the real matter within the coffin.

William Rossetti maintained that his brother's decision to consign the poems to Siddal's grave in perpetuity 'was neither obligatory nor desirable'.[93] Swinburne felt that Rossetti was 'absolutely and admirably right' to have them disinterred.[94] Viewed in this way, the exhumation of Siddal's grave can be seen simply as a matter of business. In the wildness of grief, Rossetti had made a theatrical gesture which, with the passing of time, seemed to have been an error of judgement. Siddal had no need of the poems, whilst Rossetti had been 'bereaved of poetic fame these seven and a half years past'.[95] On the other hand, the removal of the book can be seen as a species of grave-robbing, for it could be argued that the book was no longer Rossetti's to retrieve. Not only were these poems which he had given to his

wife, Siddal, by placing them in the coffin, but they were also poems which he had written to her, in a book bound by her, and which later had became soaked through with her. To regard the book and the body as separate matters, not only disregards the physical condition of both, it also disregards the symbolism of Rossetti having placed the poems in Siddal's coffin in the first place. Such disregard meant that the removal of the poems became merely a literary matter. As a result, their retrieval can be seen as worldly or fleshly action, for it seems to involve a denial of the respect which is universally afforded to the remains of the dead. Graves are not generally re-opened because it is universally held that the remains of the dead are left to rest in peace. Furthermore, honouring the remains of the dead in this way also allows an acknowledgment of the possibility of the dead's continued existence. Such a sense might become more crystallised in a Christian hope or belief in the Resurrection of the body. The remains of the dead can, in fact, be seen as beginnings. Rossetti's removal of the poems seems to suggest that Siddal is just dead matter which had no influence upon the living.

That Rossetti uses euphemisms and wished for absolute secrecy in the matter, suggests that he also felt that his action was not entirely beyond censure. Indeed, the exhumation, together with Robert Buchanan's article, *The Fleshly School of Poetry* (1871), a distinctly unfortunate title in this context, resulted in insomnia and 'an excess of sensitiveness and of distempered brooding'. In 1883, Rossetti declared, 'Let me not on any account be buried at

Highgate, but my remains burnt'.[96] This is more of a demand than a request, and the reason for it has been attributed to Rossetti's sense of guilt about having retrieved the poems, that in doing so, he had broken a solemn promise of love.[97] It might also be said, however, that Rossetti did not wish his body to be reunited with Siddal's because he knew, or rather, had had it powerfully suggested to his imagination by the book having been 'soaked through and through', that it was in an advanced state of corruption. Having his remains burnt, would also mean that his own physical remains would not deteriorate into such a disappointing state.

For reasons less mixed, and less questionable, Tennyson too was concerned about remains. His apprehension about the safety of the vessel which carried the remains of Arthur Hallam from Vienna to Clevedon can be seen in sections IX to XX of *In Memoriam*. Tennyson told James Knowles that these sections are 'all connected — about the Ship'.[98] Of all the 133 sections of the poem, section IX was the first written:

> Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
> Sailest the placid ocean-plains
> With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
> Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.
>
> So draw him home to those that mourn
> In vain; a favourable speed
> Ruffle thy mirrored mast, and lead
> Through prosperous floods his holy urn.[99]

On the surface, all seems free from storms or rain ('fair'), and gentle, and peaceable ('placid'). This surface lack of violence

is a contradiction, not only of the fact that there were violent storms off the coast of England in November 1833, but also of Tennyson's mood, 'The wild unrest that lives in woe' (XIV). 'The placid ocean-plains', and the 'fair ship' with its compelling 'mirrored mast', bear no outward sign of what the ship contains, both literally ('the case'), and also figuratively (the depths of Tennyson's grief in response to what the ship contains). Whereas the 'prosperous floods' of the sea are 'consistently successful' and 'flourishing', since Hallam's death, 'my life had drooped' (XIV); what prospers are floods of tears.

In the light of what the ship brings, 'fair' — 'giving promise of success' — is cruelly ironic. The ship should give promise of the safe arrival of Hallam's living, rather than his 'late-lost form' (XIII). Instead, the ship carries with it a sense of defeated expectation. Its touching the land only promises to confirm that Hallam — who was regarded as 'the most promising' of his contemporaries;[100] and whose compositions Spedding felt bore all the marks of his 'ripening promise' —, is no more.[101] It is not just the ship which is 'fair' ('of pleasing form'). Since 'fair' also applies 'of persons' (OED, 1a), it is a word which also describes Hallam's physical body, as well as his character and mind. In the Prologue to *In Memoriam,* Hallam is called 'Thy creature, whom I found so fair'. 'Fair', however, also applies 'of the body or its parts' (OED, 1a), and so, it also pays respect to Hallam as he now is ('my lost Arthur's loved remains'). 'Fair' then, describes both the vessel and what the

vessel bears. It embodies the sense of injustice and disbelief experienced at Hallam's death, as well as honouring what Hallam was and is.

In contrast to Henry Hallam's references to 'the case', with their felicitous ambiguities, Tennyson's 'my lost Arthur's loved remains' is a deliberate lingering on, and thus a retention of, the sense of 'fair companionship' (XXII) which Tennyson and Hallam shared. That the 'remains' are 'loved' as well, expresses Tennyson's feeling that this personal and unique love has a continued existence. Moreover, some comfort is also derived from the knowledge that although Arthur Hallam is lost, yet his remains remain, and Tennyson's love for him and for his remains, remains also.

In the next section (X), Tennyson imagines the ship's cargo:

> Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
> And travelled men from foreign lands;
> And letters unto trembling hands;
> And thy dark freight, a vanished life.'[102]

Here, the sense of past and present intimacy contained in 'my lost Arthur's loved remains', is placed in the context of other intimacies on the point of being renewed. The commonplace nature of such reunions between the living, only contains elements ('foreign' and 'trembling') of the strangeness and unrest which the arrival of Hallam's body will provoke. 'The sailor', the 'travelled men' and 'hands' might well be anxious ('trembling') about the certainty and nature of the reunions which they will find on their various

receptions (the travelled men might feel that what they knew and those they loved are now foreign to them, and vice versa; the letters might bring news of a loved one's life or death). In Hallam's case, however, there is already a confirmation of such uncertainties. Arthur Hallam is no more. For those not intimately involved with Hallam, and intent upon a renewal of their own intimacies, the conveyance and arrival of Hallam's body is just a part of the business of shipping ('freight'). In section XIII, the bereaved poet too feels that

> now so strange do these things seem,
> Mine eyes have leisure for their tears;
>
> My fancies time to rise on wing,
> And glance about the approaching sails,
> As though they brought but merchants' bales,
> And not the burthen that they bring.[103]

Both 'freight' and 'burthen' manage to stress the physical reality of Hallam's body. Its passage is seen as an impersonal matter: a 'burden' is 'a load (whether of man, animal, vehicle) [...] Now only applied to the carrying capacity of a ship' (*OED*, 3). Tennyson's use of the poetic form, 'burthen', is a means of recovering the sense that the passage of Hallam's body is a personal matter: a 'burthen' in a figurative sense. That a ship's burden is stated as a certain number of tons, and that 'freight' is 'a ship-load', suggests that what the 'fair ship' carries, has a great weight and size. This is so both literally (Hallam was in a lead coffin, and in a square iron box), and figuratively (a load of sorrow). The discord created by the configuration of weight and size (both literal and figurative), is given form in the suggestion that 'thy dark freight', contains 'a vanished life'.

In Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), Stephen Smith and Henry Knight both journey to St Launce's station with the same object: they each wish to renew their engagement with Elfride Swancourt. The hopeful tenor of their journey is darkened by the fact that at the rear of the train upon which they are travelling, there is 'a dark and curious-looking van'.[104] Whilst waiting on the platform at Plymouth, Knight and Smith overhear two men:

> "This carriage is light enough," said one in a grim tone. "Light as vanity; full o'nothing."
> "Nothing in size, but a good deal in signification," said the other, a man of brighter mind and manners.
> Stephen then perceived that to their train was attached that same carriage of dark and grand aspect which had haunted them all the way from London.[105]

It gradually becomes clear that 'the sombre van'[106] contains the form of Elfride Swancourt, contained in 'a light-coloured coffin of satin-wood, brightly polished'.[107] Hardy achieves curious contrasts between the outward appearance of the van ('dark') and the outward appearance of what is inside ('a light-coloured coffin'); between the 'dark' van and its total weight ('"light enough"'), and the significance of its contents ('"Light as vanity"'), and between the play of 'light' against 'grim tone', and the 'brightly polished' coffin against 'a man of brighter mind'. The paradoxical nature of what the van contains is seen in these contrasts, which are a kind of development of the paradoxical contrast of '"full o'nothing"'. For the railway-man, '"full o'nothing"' expresses how this van is a reduction and an inversion of normal practice: usually, railway carriages are full of living people. For Elfride Swancourt's father, and for Knight and Smith, however, the fact that she is 'nothing' is everything.

The uncomfortable juxtaposition of 'full' and 'nothing' brings together ideas of weight — both the physical nature of her coffin and of the bereaved's grief — and significance, both for those who know Elfride Swancourt and for those who do not.

The strangeness of Hallam's arrival — he arrives home and yet it is not really him who arrives home — and of what Hallam has now become ('the burthen'), is conveyed by 'thy dark freight, a vanished life'. This evokes both the mysterious nature of the disappearance of Hallam's life, and of what he has now become, and also the process of decaying by which the physical sign of his life is now vanishing. 'Thy' recognises the ambiguous nature of Hallam's corpse. It is an address to the ship ('Thou bring'st the sailor') — an inanimate object which seems to have a personality of its own — and it is also an address to Hallam himself, who was once animate, but is now inanimate. 'Dark' (possibly also the colour of Hallam's coffin) goes on to reveal that Hallam is now known and unknown. His body is known, in the sense that it is resembles Hallam in appearance, and is also unknown, in the sense that it is not Hallam as he was. 'Hands so often clasped in mine' (IX) could be clasped once more, but not as a renewal of how they had been clasped in life. Although they are the same hands in appearance, yet they are not the same hands, neither to the touch, nor to the emotions which they touched and would now touch.

Tennyson's 'brooding on the dear one dead' (XXXVII), is, in the sections concerned with the passage, arrival and burial of Hallam,

a cherishing of and a hovering closely around Hallam as a dead body. As Gladstone observed about the whole poem, 'the poet never moves away a step from the grave of his friend, but, while circling round it, always has a new point of view.'[108] His brooding on the physical remains of his dead friend, leads him to a consideration of other kinds of remains: Hallam's individuality, Tennyson's, and 'What to me remains of good?' (VI).

In response to Henry Hallam's request to delineate his son, Tennyson wrote:

> I attempted to draw a memoir of his life and character, but I failed to do him justice. I failed even to please myself. I could scarcely have pleased you.'[109]

This sense of failure is incorporated in the Prologue to *In Memoriam*, when the poet asks that his wild and wandering cries will be forgiven 'where they fail in truth' (Prologue), and in section LVII, in which, as Tennyson commented, 'the poet speaks of these poems. Methinks I have built a rich shrine to my friend, but it will not last' ('My work will fail').[110] Although the awareness of failure of those friends who wrote for Hallam's *Remains* is shared by Tennyson in *In Memoriam*, this becomes part of its strength. Henry Hallam discerned that in *In Memoriam*, 'the image of Arthur hovers, like a dim shadow'.[111] 'Hovers', implies that the poem achieves partial success in delineating Hallam's image, for 'hovers' suggests that the poem evokes a lingering and indeterminate sense of his image which remains suspended in the air, as if poised between realisation and non-realisation, as if half-revealed and half-concealed. 'Like a dim shadow' conveys the

idea of a presence which is not seen in itself, but is seen only in the heralding or following shadow, or is seen only in its shadowiness, indistinctly, as if hesitant in its presence.

Tennyson's genius as a friend and as a poet was to imagine and to hover on Hallam as a friend with both physical and spiritual qualities, which are past, present and to be. Section CXXIX of *In Memoriam* arrives at the landing-place where Hallam is a 'Dear friend... / So far, so near...'

> Known and unknown; human, divine;
> Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
> Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
> Mine, mine, for ever, ever, mine;
>
> Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
> Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
> Behold I dream a dream of good,
> And mingle all the world with thee.'[12]

The lack of a conjunction ('human, divine') accentuates Tennyson's sense that these conditions and qualities are separate and yet close together. This paradox is conveyed by Tennyson's strange adverbs, (because they appear paradoxical and ungrammatical) 'deeplier' and 'darklier'. 'Deeplier' would seem to mingle together part of what is understood by 'deep', 'deeper' and 'deeply', and 'darklier' would seem to mingle together what is understood by 'dark', 'darker' and 'darkly'. And yet, Tennyson's formulation of 'deeplier' and 'darklier' goes beyond all of these different degrees of deepness and darkness. 'Deeplier' and 'darklier' seek to convey states or conditions which are beyond words — 'deeplier' and 'darklier' are not listed in the *OED* —, that is, to express states which are somehow even deeper (more

profoundly or intensely deep) than deep, and somehow even darker (more profoundly or intensely dark) than dark. Thus, the conditions which these adverbs invoke are both known and unknown. Tennyson had a deep love for, and a dark understanding of Hallam when he was 'human'; now that he is 'divine' his love and understanding reach out beyond the bounds of the known world. (A similar reaching has also been attempted with 'freshlier' in section XCV, when Tennyson seeks to describe the movement and conditions of the trees after his 'trance'). Exactly what Tennyson means by 'deeplier' and 'darklier' in section CXXIX is both known and unknown to Tennyson himself. His awareness of the strangeness of his sense of his 'Strange friend' is further embodied in the paradox 'darklier understood', for what is understood is not dark, in the sense of obscure or hid.

Thus, Tennyson's adverbs span both what is 'human, divine', as they seek to bring together Hallam's existence as it was and is and continues to be. That Tennyson manages to 'mingle all the world with thee' by the conscious formulation of 'deeplier' and 'darklier', overcomes the feeling of Hallam's other friends, that their words could not 'draw him home to those that mourn' (IX). Although *In Memoriam* recalls the passing occasion, it does more than just record what was no more: the poem speaks of a belief that the individuality lasts after death. Unlike those friends who were restricted, or who restricted themselves, to a prose record of Hallam as he had been, Tennyson's failure to provide a memoir and his decision to write poetry instead, became a strength, for it meant that he did not have to think of Hallam

only in the past tense. Whereas Hallam's other friends had to delineate how Hallam had been in life, *In Memoriam* considers what Hallam was like physically in death. Whereas other friends attempted to give an idea of how he had been spirit-like in life, *In Memoriam* goes on to imagine him as a Spirit with a continued existence in this life and also in an after-life.

II

DISSOLUTION

> In all of Mr Dickens' works the fantastic has been his great resource; and while his fancy was lively and vigorous it accomplished great things. But the fantastic, when the fancy is dead, is a very poor business.
>
> Henry James, Review of *Our Mutual Friend* (1865)[1]

In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson, writing from a personal sense of loss, is concerned with the death of a single and unique individual. By contrast, Dickens, in his last complete novel, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), considers a wide diversity of deaths and different forms of death. Whereas in *In Memoriam*, Tennyson attempts to recover and maintain what remains of an intimacy with Arthur Hallam, both as he was and as he is, in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens is exercised by what remains of the dead (their personality and possessions), 'upon the earth-side of the grave' only (221).[2]

In Chapter 14 of Book the Second of *Our Mutual Friend*, Mortimer Lightwood, Eugene Wrayburn and Mr Inspector finally manage to track Gaffer Hexam down. He is found drowned and his body is laid out on the shore of the river from which he had dragged so many dead bodies himself:

> "What is to be done with the remains?" asked Lightwood.
> "If you wouldn't object to standing by him half a minute, sir," was the reply, "I'll find the nearest of our men to come and take charge of him; — I still call it *him*, you see," said Mr Inspector, looking back as he went, with a philosophical smile upon the force of habit. (223)

Whereas Lightwood's reference to 'the remains', treats the dead

Hexam as dead matter, Mr Inspector's '"I still call it him"' pays respect to the strangely ambiguous nature of a corpse. The dead Hexam is simultaneously an impersonal thing ('it') and retains a trace of Hexam's humanity (the Inspector does not use Hexam's name, but refers to him as 'him'). Mr Inspector's 'line of work' is 'philosophical', in so far as he is engaged 'on a matter of Identification', finding out the mystery of 'Who do you think it might have been?' (68). The juxtapositions of what is animate with what is inanimate in 'who' and 'it', and 'I still call it him', reveal how the physical presence of the newly-dead creates a philosophical conundrum, that is, that it is impossible for the same thing to be and yet not to be.

It is ironic that Gaffer Hexam's corpse should bring into focus such ambiguities, for in the first chapter of the novel he denies that a corpse could belong to two worlds at the same time:

> "And what if I had been accused of robbing a dead man, Gaffer?" [said Rogue Riderhood]
> "You COULDN'T do it."
> "Couldn't you, Gaffer?"
> "No. Has a dead man use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? T'other world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, miss it? Don't try to go confounding the rights and wrongs of things in that way. (47)

Hexam's referring to the dead as 'a dead man' and then as 'a corpse', has the effect of blurring the very distinction between 'This world' and 'T'other world' which he is trying to make fast. Although Hexam attempts to make 'a dead man' belong to 'T'other world', he is confounded by the very phrase. 'A dead man' belongs

to this world, not only because 'man' retains a trace of what the dead was in this world, but also because a dead man remains in this world as physical remains and as a memory. Moreover, Hexam gets his living from making the dead belong to this world, by reclaiming them from the watery world of the river, and by making what belonged to a man and now to a corpse — the money in his pocket — belong to him, Hexam. The money Hexam obtains, therefore, like the corpses he drags back, belongs both to the dead and to the living. Although a dead man has no use for money for himself, yet the dead can retain powers of possession and distribution through the agency of wills, and in this legal sense, therefore, the dead do continue to have a presence among the living, as John Harmon, supposed drowned, but living under the name of Rokesmith, demonstrates.

That the dead, and what belongs to the dead, are made to belong to this world, means that reverence and respect for the complexity and the uniqueness of an individual, and for the loss of that individual, is swallowed up by a spirit of pecuniary speculation. What remains of the dead — their bodies and their estate —, has become a commodity, in much the same way that what remains of the act of living (the 'coal-dust, vegetable-dust, bone-dust, crockery dust, rough-dust, and sifted-dust' of old Harmon's mounds) has also (56). Instead of the dead literally residing in well-tended graves, and figuratively also, in the minds and in the hearts of their fellow men, the dead have unexpected continued existences in the gossip, in the pockets, and even in the hampers, of a world

which has no room for sentiment, because it is only interested in '"what money can make of life"'.

After Gaffer Hexam's appropriation of the dead, Mr Venus, '"Articulator of human bones"', is next in line in what happens to what remains of the dead (128). His work presents the next stage in Gaffer's argument: if a dead man has no use for money, a dead man has no use for a dead body. Mr Venus shows Wegg the contents of his shop:

> "...My working bench. My young man's bench. A Wice. Tools. Bones, warious. Skulls, warious. Preserved Indian baby. African ditto. Bottled preparations, warious. Everything within reach of your hand, in good preservation. The mouldy ones a-top. What's in those hampers over them again, I don't quite remember. Say, human warious. Cat. Articulated English baby. Dogs. Ducks. Glass eyes, warious. Mummied bird. Dried cuticle, warious. Oh dear me! That's the general panoramic view." (126)

The question of where the dead belong is given a grotesque twist by Venus' trade. When he assembles 'human warious' into one skeleton, he is not faced with whether the dead belong to this world or the other, but with the practical problem of which bone belongs where. Although some parts of the body retain their individuality — 'every man has his own ribs, and no other man's will go with them' — for the most part, they are all alike (124). Although the parts all belong to, and have their proper place in a skeleton, as long as they appear to match, it does not much matter from which body they originate. Although Venus records the nationality and particularity of some of these remains ('Indian baby'), these qualities are also lost ('African ditto'). What is bred in the bone, in the sense of the origin and

personality of these parts ('one leg English, one leg Belgian'), cannot be determined from looking at the bone itself. Venus' question 'What's in those hampers' reduces bones to object and commodities. His answer ('Say, human warious') retains a trace of their humanity ('human'), and at the same time reduces this to something impersonal and indistinct ('Say...warious'). The physical remains of the dead are, like the interior of the shop itself, 'a muddle of objects'. The individual identity of the dead has become dismembered, as parts of human bodies are jumbled together, and lie a-top and alongside animal bodies, all in different stages of preparation, preservation and deterioration.

Silas Wegg's enquiries after the whereabouts of the bone of his amputated leg, brings Venus' practical problem back to a question of who the remains of the dead belong to: Wegg still feels the bone belongs to him, even though Venus is now in possession of it. Although Wegg's inverse synecdoche — '"where am I?...what did you give for me?...What will you take for me?"' (126) — makes the question of belonging a pecuniary matter, it is also mixed with a more personal concern:

> "I shouldn't like [...] to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person." (127)

Wegg's strange sensation of being able to reclaim a part of him which is dead, whilst the rest of him is still living, gives voice to a general concern which those who are fully dead are not able to articulate. Venus' dispersal and articulation, is an affront to the respect which is universally afforded to the remains of the

dead, by the bereaved, and those mindful of death (Betty Higden keeps money sewn in her dress in order to ensure a decent burial). Sentiment desires that the remains of the dead reside separately in graves rather than miscellaneously in 'hampers'; that the personal names (as opposed to Venus' 'human'), and thus the individuality (as opposed to Venus' 'warious') of the remains of the dead, are marked and remembered (as opposed to Venus' 'I don't quite remember'). At the same time, however, Venus' hampers and his comments about them, also represent the lack of respect with which those dead who are buried in what is thought to be the proper place, are treated. Venus' shop is like the churchyard where Betty Higden is buried: in both, 'there was...not so much as one single tombstone' (577). The description of the churchyard where Higden lies, leads to the following comment:

> It might not be to do an unreasonably great deal for the diggers and hewers, in a registering age, if we ticketed their graves at the common charge; so that a new generation might know which was which: so that the soldier, sailor, emigrant, coming home, should be able to identify the resting-place of father, mother, playmate, or betrothed. For we turn up our eyes and say that we are all alike in death, and we might turn them down and work the saying out in this world so far. It might be sentimental, perhaps? But how say ye, my lords and gentleman and honourable boards, shall we not find good standing-room left for a little sentiment, if we look into our crowds? (577-8)

Dickens' request that the feelings of the bereaved be respected is presented in language which points up and parodies the way in which the age's desire for profit turns aside individual sentiment. His tender wish for 'a little sentiment' to be shown by 'the diggers and hewers' — after the fall of Jericho, Joshua shows compassion to the Gibeonites: '"Let them live, but let them

be hewers of wood"' — is turned into a kind of commercial opportunity ('a good deal'), as 'diggers and hewers' evokes the mercantile and industrial world of construction, railways, canals, and coal-mines. The request for the affectionate and laudatory commemoration of the memory of the deceased by monuments and epitaphs, is reduced by 'ticketed...at the common charge'. A 'ticket' is 'a short written notice or document; a memorandum, a note, a billet' (OED, 1) and 'a written notice for public information [...] *esp.* a slip of cardboard, metal, paper, etc., attached to an object, and bearing its name, description, price, or the like' (OED, 2). Thus, 'ticketed' and 'common charge' makes the act of commemoration less personal and permanent, and more to do with legal and commercial concerns.

A similar traducement occurs in the phrase, 'in a registering age'. The idea of a register evokes religious and secular associations: 'the Register of God' (ensuring that not one is lost); the register of baptisms, marriages, and burials in a parish, kept by the clergyman; the register of births, marriages and deaths, kept by an official (a registrar), and the register containing the forms of writs of the Common Law ('the Register of Writs', or 'of the Chancery'). In the world of *Our Mutual Friend,* Dickens shows how a world only concerned with 'what money can make of life', makes life into a matter of money. What should be matters of sentiment — births, deaths, and marriages — have become matters of commercial and legal interest and speculation. The search by the Boffins for an orphan to adopt, creates a 'market', in which 'it was found impossible to complete the

philanthrophic transaction without buying the orphan' (244); the Lammles 'hopeful marriage contract [...] signed sealed and delivered' (173) is a business partnership whose bubble quickly bursts. The age is only interested in, and therefore only registers, those things of commercial and legal importance. 'The mysterious paper currency which circulates round London' (191) has only a transitory record ('ticketed') in the registering of shares, patents and law suits. That what is personal and to do with sentiment is lost, is made explicit by Dickens' desire that 'a new generation might know which was which': the omission of 'grave' after 'which', and the use of 'which' rather than 'whose', reveals how the dead have been commodified. The names and bodies of the dead have been reduced to objects which evoke no personal sentiment. When Wegg gets his hands on the bone from his leg, it is with a query about whether 'bone' can be bought, '"As a legal point?"', not as a point of sentiment (351).

The remains of the dead, then, are lost to and forgotten by the living. Apart from Gaffer Hexam and Mr Venus, whose meat and drink comes from dealing with the dead, 'you got nothing out of bodies' (69). In *Our Mutual Friend,* Dickens asserts that the dead should not be treated with cold neglect, or as a commodity, or as discarded or lost property, but with humanity, and in recognition of our mutual friend, our common humanity, and thus, our common mortality. The commonplace saying, 'we are all alike in death', is pushed to the margins by a social world concerned with money and with the differences created by the living and the dead's material standing. Dickens attempts 'to work the saying out in

this world', by focusing on the sameness of the dead, and on the ways in which the uniqueness of a human personality is subsumed in, or swamped by, the universal fact of death. His interest in how 'we are all alike in death' can be seen as a development of Dickens as a novelist; as in previous novels, he is interested in and fascinated by the different histories and personalities of individuals, who retain their differences.[3] That the dead Gaffer Hexam is referred to as 'Gaffer', 'the body', the drowned man', 'this man that was', 'the remains', and 'it him' conveys this dissolution of identity, which death effects. Dickens recovers the mystery and strangeness of the commonplace, Death is a great leveller, by contemplating the process by which a named human individual with a particular personality becomes a corpse, then bones, then just a name, and then a memory, until at last, all traces of existence, and thus, of individual identity, are lost.

The character of John Harmon is able to witness how this process of dissolution affects himself, or a part of himself, while he is still alive. His origin can be traced to a note made by Dickens in his Book of Memoranda:

> LEADING INCIDENT FOR A STORY — A man — young and eccentric? — feigns to be dead, and is dead to all intents and purposes external to himself, and for years retains that singular view of life and character.[4]

As far as the external world of the Inquest and the Voice of Society is concerned, Harmon is dead in a legal and social sense: he is no longer able to carry out his intents and purposes (that is, of making a direct claim to his inheritance and fulfilling

openly the condition of his father's will by marrying Bella Wilfer). The ambiguity of Dickens' memorandum also suggests that Harmon is dead to the generally avaricious intents and purposes of others. And yet, although Harmon cuts himself off from these, and is able to view them, and the conditions of the will, as things which are external to himself, this also has a deadening effect.

Henry James felt that John Harmon, was one of Dickens' 'weaker — that is, his mere conventional — characters'.[5] Beyond the highly unconventional singularity of his position as 'the living-dead man', Harmon remains as a leading incident, rather than a character, who is more than just 'young and eccentric'. Harmon's singular view of life overshadows his character, both in the life of the novel and also in Dickens' presentation of him. That he remains a figure, is partly attributable to Chapter 13 of Book the Second (A Solo and a Duett), where Dickens has Rokesmith reveal himself:

> "So John Harmon died, and Julius Handford disappeared, and John Rokesmith was born." (428)

The sudden shift of focus to a first person narrative is at odds with the 'general panoramic view' of 'human warious' which the preceding and following chapters of *Our Mutual Friend* present. Moreover, that there is a full revelation by Rokesmith, is also at variance with the novel's method of seeing, which is predominantly hidden and analytical. 'The great looking-glass above the side-board [which] reflects the table and the company dining at the Veneerings' (52), reveals the company to the reader for what they

really are: like the reflection, all of them are without any real depth; they fail to reflect upon themselves. To the world, Mr Lammle ('all sparkle and glitter' [318]) and Mrs Lammle (who possesses 'a carefully arranged face' [182-3] have a 'shining reputation' (307). Dickens' choice of words, however, reveals what is not visible to those who see the Lammles, that is, that the happiness of the Lammles' marriage is only a 'pretence'. As well as pointing up the veneer of contentment and wealth through words which evoke 'a high state of varnish and polish' (48), Dickens also reveals when he momentarily puts by the curtain:

> Charming to see Mr. and Mrs. Lammle taking leave so gracefully, and going down the stairs so lovingly and sweetly. Not quite so charming to see their smiling faces fall and brood as they dropped moodily into separate corners of their little carriage. But to be sure, that was a sight behind the scenes, which nobody saw, and which nobody was meant to see. (189)

Although the Lammles are conscious of their pretence, they do not give conscious voice to it, unlike Rokesmith in his spoken confession. In contrast to Rokesmith's revelation, the method of disclosure of the 'skeleton' in the Lammles' closet, is more complex. The eye of the novel observes the Lammles when they are aware that they are being observed by the eyes of the world, and at a moment when they think that they are not being observed. The surface of their faces is shown to reveal their hidden depths, or lack of depth, and this is pointed to again, by means of the authorial comment. Thus, throughout this exposure of the Lammles, a double focus is maintained, in which the reader is granted temporary leave to look on, as well as behind, the scene.

The experience of death, too, is something which can only be looked on, rather than written about from the point of view of having experienced it. Whereas the deaths of Radfoot, Hexam, Higden, Headstone and Riderhood, and the near-deaths of Riderhood and Wrayburn are all looked at, in *A Solo and a Duett*, Dickens attempts to write about the experience of death in the first person. Unable to write about what it is to be dead from the point of view of a dead man, Dickens attempts the next best alternative, that is, he tries to imagine what it is to be thought to be dead. In trying to get into Harmon's skin, as it were, Dickens is faced with a situation which is on and beyond the margins of the known world. Harmon's admission that his situation is 'so difficult that, though I think of it every day, I never thoroughly think it out', can be seen to apply to Dickens' treatment of Harmon's situation (422).

In Chapter 13, Rokesmith opines:

> "It is a sensation not to be experienced by many mortals," said he, "to be looking into a churchyard on a wild windy night, and to feel that I no more hold a place among the living than these dead do, and even to know that I lie buried somewhere else, as they lie buried here. Nothing uses me to it. A spirit that was once a man could hardly feel stranger or lonelier, going unrecognized among mankind, than I do." (422)

When Rokesmith considers that the dead do not hold a place among the living, he is thinking of the dead in the sense of their physical remains. His distinction, that the dead and the living have their separate places, is confounded by Gaffer Hexam's philosophical and literal speculations, and also by Mr Venus' trade. Moreover, what remains of the memory of the dead, also

holds a place among the living: Bella Wilfer wears 'ridiculous mourning' and goes to live with the Boffins (80); the Boffins wish to find some orphan child and adopt him and give him John's name, and hope to see the good that will be done with Harmon's money; they keep Boffin's Bower '"in remembrance of our old master, our old master's children [of which John Harmon is one], and our old service"' (233). Whereas the Boffins 'take care of the names' which Harmon's children wrote up on the wall ('"They shan't be rubbed out in our time, nor yet, if we can help it, in the time after us." [232-3]), the names of others, such as those buried in churchyards, are lost. John Harmon is able to experience what happens to a vestige of his own identity — his name — after death.

That Radfoot's corpse is identified and buried as if it were Harmon's, means that Harmon has become separated from his real name, and has also experienced a kind of separation from his body. Harmon remains alive in a body which has not been identified as belonging to him; but a body which has been identified as being him lies buried somewhere else. As a result of the real grave made for Radfoot, Rokesmith makes a metaphorical grave for John Harmon, and 'the Sexton Rokesmith' piles earth upon 'John Harmon's grave', in order to keep down who he really is (435). Thus, the real death and burial of a body thought to be Harmon's, is repeated by himself, not on his actual body, but on his own sense of himself. And the separation of his name from his body is also repeated by the action of society, as described at the end of Chapter 2, Book the First:

> Thus, like the tides on which it had been borne to the knowledge of men, the Harmon Murder — as it came to be popularly called — went up and down, and ebbed and flowed, now in the town, now in the country, now among palaces, now among hovels, now among lords and ladies and gentlefolks, now among labourers and hammerers and ballast-heavers, until at last, after a long interval of slack water, it got out to sea and drifted away. (74)

For the social world, the death of John Harmon becomes a matter for speculation, rather than of sentiment. That 'the Harmon Murder...[is] what it came to be popularly called', reveals how the living personality of John Harmon has become separated from his name. The public is interested in the details of his death and the reasons for it, rather than in who John Harmon was. In contrast to 'the cold language of the world' (306), Dickens' lyrical passage treats the memory of the dead with tenderness. The length of Dickens' sentence commemorates the memory of Harmon, by recording its presence in, and by delaying its departure from, the social world. And yet, although the anaphora ('now among...now among') insists upon the continued presence of 'the Harmon Murder', the presence of this recedes as the sentence gets further away from its subject. The focus of the sentence shifts from the memory of the Harmon Murder to where the Harmon Murder moves. This enactment of how the memory of the dead ebbs away from its origin — a living personality becomes a name, which is then reduced to a label or newspaper headline, and then becomes a tide of gossip — also allows the reader, through the delaying effect of Dickens' rhythmically balanced phrasing, to consider the gradual action of dissolution which an identity undergoes, and

which those in the 'general panoramic view' presented, are unable to see.

When Rogue Riderhood is run down, and then 'grappled up' from the river, 'it is Riderhood and no other, or it is the outer husk and shell of Riderhood and no other', which is brought up to the first-floor bedroom of The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters (503).

> No one had the least regard for the man: with them all, he has been an object of avoidance, suspicion and aversion; but the spark of life is curiously separable from himself now, and they have a deep interest in it, probably because it *is* life, and they are living and must die. (503)

The uniqueness of Riderhood's human personality is drowned by his loss of consciousness almost to the point of death. What remains is 'this flabby lump of mortality' (504), in which what defined him as a man has become curiously separated from himself. The reader is made to recognise that we all share a common humanity through the concentration of the on-lookers on the mysterious 'spark of life'. It is this spark, and the departure of it, which unites all that are living. Dickens indicates the fact that this is so, by uniting the interest of the on-lookers in this spark, with that of the reader: Riderhood is addressed as 'you', and the reader is made a part of the scene ('we'). That 'we are all alike in death' — the spark of life departs, and with it our identity — is impressed upon 'everybody present' through the fact that 'no one had the least regard for the man'. When Riderhood attempts to rat on Gaffer Hexam, by accusing him of having committed the Harmon Murder, Wrayburn and Lightwood smell a rat. During his interview with them, Riderhood 'fumbled at an old

sodden fur cap, formless and mangy, that looked like a furry animal, dog or cat, puppy or kitten, drowned and decaying.' (195) As Riderhood walked in front of them, 'one might have fancied that the very fashion of humanity had departed from his feet.' (204) Thus, although Riderhood appears to have had no humanity in life — 'he has been the *object* of avoidance, suspicion, and aversion' —, yet in what looks like his death, he becomes an 'object of interest and sympathy' (505). Even though, he remains an object ('the dank carcase'), the spark which gives it life, evokes a human response, as it is recognised that it is this spark which lends us our identity and thus, our common humanity:

> Neither Riderhood in this world, nor Riderhood in the other, could draw tears from them; but a striving human soul between the two can do it easily.
>
> He is struggling to come back. Now he is almost here, now he is far away again. Now he is struggling harder to get back. And yet, like us all, when we swoon — like us all, every day of our lives when we wake — is instinctively unwilling to be restored to the consciousness of this existence, and would be left dormant, if he could. (504-5)

A similar striving is seen to be experienced by Eugene Wrayburn after he is attacked by Bradley Headstone. Unlike Riderhood, Wrayburn begins to be sensible of his 'wandering away I don't know where.'

> "If you knew the harassing anxiety that gnaws and wears me when I am wandering in those places — where are those places, Mortimer? They must be at an immense distance!" (807)

'The suspense and mystery [...] of where you may be now' which applies to Riderhood (although he is not sensible of this himself), and which torments Wrayburn ('"Where are those endless places, Mortimer?"'), is also a question which applies to 'us all,

every day of our lives when we wake'. The loss of the consciousness of this existence (be it half-drowned, half-murdered, a swoon, or sleep) are only kinds of death, rather than death itself. And yet, the suspense and mystery of what happens to the identity on these occasions, leads to a consideration of what happens when we lose the consciousness of this existence 'for good': it might be that we are 'left dormant' — existing but not conscious of existence —, or we might be 'wandering...endless places...at an immense distance' — that is, without purpose, and in infinity, and far away from this existence. Dickens, however, does not investigate these states. Instead, the suspense and mystery of death has the effect, as it does on those who look on Riderhood's outer shell, of making us take a deep or deeper interest in the spark of life. By looking on those who look as though they are dead, Dickens makes the commonplace observation about those who looked on Riderhood — 'they are living and must die' — one which applies to us all.

For Wrayburn, and for the reader, the commonplace 'We must all die' is transformed into the acute consciousness 'I must die — and soon'.[6] Feeling the truth of this commonplace, results in the death of Wrayburn as an 'embodied conundrum' (339): he looks back on his 'trifling, wasted youth' (825), and is 'changed' (883). His coming to new life with his discovery of his previously hidden depths, after his baptism in the river, results in his rejection of 'Society'. The moral which is drawn from Wrayburn's transformation is, that an awareness of the reality of our death, should make us all value our humanity the more. An acute sense

of our mortality, and of how 'we are all alike in death', is to realise the vanity of the world, and in particular, of the hollowness and shallowness of a 'Society' which takes no interest in humanity, and is only concerned with appearances.

Henry James observed that in *Our Mutual Friend*,

> The word *humanity* strikes us as strangely discordant, in the midst of these pages; for, let us boldly declare it, there is no humanity here. Humanity is [...] what men have in common with each other, and not what they have in distinction.[7]

Although this criticism derives from James' growing dissatisfaction with Dickens' habit of creating figures who 'have nothing in common with mankind',[8] yet with regard to how the social world of *Our Mutual Friend* dehumanises people, James' comments are strikingly felicitous. As James points out, Dickens' creations had always been marked by 'the habit of specialising people by vivid oddities'.[9] In *Our Mutual Friend*, however, this habit also has a direct bearing upon the ways in which money has a deadening effect on people. *Our Mutual Friend* shows, comically, tragically, and grotesquely, how a desire for wealth means that human beings exist, and treat one another, as if they were not human beings, but possessions. Lady Tippins labels the Veneerings 'my exclusive property' (301); Bella Wilfer wonders: "Am I ever to be made the property of strangers?" (434) 'Rogue Riderhood, by George! seemed to be made public property on, now, and that every man seemed to think himself free to handle his name as if it were a Street Pump'."

The loss of human identity which death effects — in corpses dragged from the river, in bones residing in hampers, in churchyards without gravestones, in the tide of social gossip — involves the separation of a name from the living physical presence it denotes. *Our Mutual Friend* demonstrates that an identity can be lost through this kind of separation, even before the living are dead. Miss Peecher examines her pupil, on a matter of Identification:

> "I wonder," said Miss Peecher, as she sat making up her weekly report on a half-holiday afternoon, "what they call Hexam's sister?"
>
> Mary Ann, at her needlework, attendant and attentive, held her arm up.
>
> "Well, Mary Ann?"
>
> "She is named Lizzie, ma'am."
>
> "She can hardly be named Lizzie, I think, Mary Anne," returned Miss Peecher, in tunefully instructive voice. "Is Lizzie a Christian name, Mary Anne?"
>
> Mary Anne laid down her work, rose, hooked herself behind, as being under catechization, and replied: "No, it is a corruption, Miss Peecher."
>
> "Who gave her that name?" Miss Peecher was going on, from the mere force of habit, when she checked herself, on Mary Anne's evincing theological impatience to strike in with her godfathers and godmothers, and said: "I mean of what name is it a corruption?"
>
> "Elizabeth, or Eliza, Miss Peecher."
>
> "Right, Mary Anne. Whether there were any Lizzies in the early Christian Church must be considered very doubtful, very doubtful." Miss Peecher was exceedingly sage here: "Speaking correctly, we say then that Hexam's sister is called Lizzie; not that she is named so. (394)

Miss Peecher's examination is a 'little transparent fiction', because it is conducted as if it were for Mary Ann's benefit, not her own. Miss Peecher loves Bradley Headstone, and has strong suspicions that Hexam's sister is at the bottom of his being more preoccupied than usual. She corrects Mary Ann partly out of her pedantic force of habit of doing everything 'strictly according to

rule' (268), and partly because the appellation of 'Lizzie' suggests an affectionate familiarity of which she is jealous (Headstone addresses Emma Peecher as '"Miss Peecher"' [269]). Her attempt to make a 'neat' and 'methodical' (268) distinction between 'named' and 'called', means that she concentrates on a point of grammar, rather than on the human character of the subject of her examination. 'Speaking correctly' does not reveal what Hexam's sister is really named, or more importantly, what she is really like, or if Headstone is in love with her, or vice versa (except for the fact that she is called Lizzie may suggest that Headstone calls her so).

Miss Peecher reduces the complexity of a personality through her dismissal of popular appellations. 'Hexam's sister' is also the daughter of Jesse Hexam ('commonly called Gaffer' [198]). She is also called 'Liz' by her brother, who is named Charles Hexam, but is called 'Charley' by his sister, and 'Hexam' by Headstone. On occasion, she is also called 'Lizzie-Mizzie-Wizzie' (283) by 'the doll's dressmaker...whose real name was Fanny Cleaver; but she had long ago to bestow upon herself the appellation of Miss Jenny Wren' (283). After the marriage of Hexam's sister to Wrayburn, she is referred to by Lady Tippins (who has no known Christian name) as 'the bride', 'a horrid female waterman', 'a female waterman, turned factory girl' (888), and by Mr Podsnap (who also has no known Christian name), as 'this young woman' (889). Melvin Twemlow (who has been seen 'counterfeiting the late Horatio Akershem' at the Lammles' wedding) seeks to restore some of her dignity, by insisting that she be called, 'this lady' (891).

Miss Peecher's dismissal of colloquial terms, ignores the fact that such terms are more than 'a part of speech' (270), they are also part of the truth of who someone really is. Her attempt to confine Hexam's sister to what she has been named, is too 'neat', because it fails to recognise that an individual is not an island entire unto himself, but has a variety of existences in different social worlds. The proliferation of colloquial terms which occurs throughout *Our Mutual Friend*, represents the way that an individual's identity proliferates in a variety of contexts. All the various appellations by which someone is known, are like fragments which go to make up an individual's total identity. Although many characters give themselves, or others, names by their 'own authority', names do not just belong to an individual, but are part of a social contract. As John Harmon discovers, names are a currency which are an individual's means of existing in, and having dealings with, the world.

The social world of *Our Mutual Friend*, however, attaches different values to the currency of names. Individuals are not defined or judged by their Christian identity, or virtues, such as charity and humility, but by their monetary value. What once signified an original state of purity (the Christian name conferred at Baptism, with the washing away of sins), is sullied by a social world, which is only concerned with paper currency (unclean, as a result of it being 'gyrated here there and everywhere' [191] and because of its association with dust-mounds). When Lightwood brings the company at the Veneerings' up-to-date with 'the story of the man from somewhere' (470), the

flow of his narrative is momentarily interrupted by his inability to recall Rokesmith's name:

> his Secretary...whose name, I think, is Chokesmith — but it doesn't in the least matter — say Artichoke (471-2).

Lightwood's carelessness about the Secretary's name is a specific example of how the social world cares more about money and what people represent financially or socially, than it cares about the depths of human identity. 'It doesn't in the least matter' what the Secretary's name is, because who the Secretary is, as a living individual does not matter, to Lightwood or to his audience. Lightwood's corruption of the name Rokesmith, has the effect of reducing the living individuality which appertains to the name of Rokesmith to a sound ('Chokesmith'), and then to an article ('Artichoke'), which although it is living, conveys no sense of Rokesmith's human qualities. The lack of interest in a person's individual humanity is also shown by the traducement of personal names to impersonal titles. Dining at the Veneerings' are 'the Member, the Engineer, the Payer-off of the National Debt, a Poem on Shakespeare, the Grievance, and the Public Office' (49). At a later dinner, 'there is the brilliant genius who turned the shares into that remarkably exact sum of three hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, no shillings, no pence' (887). What each of these various persons does or has done, or is worth, is neatly 'ticketed', by appellations which are only abstractions.

When Tippins asks Lightwood 'to tell us something else' about the man from somewhere, he first of all replies, '"I exhausted

myself for life that day, and there is nothing more to be got out of me"' (470). The social world of the novel makes the philosophical conundrum of 'what's in a name?', merely a matter of belonging. 'The bird of prey', Gaffer Hexam, is interested in what money can be got out of corpses. The social world is only interested in what can be got out of a name, in the sense of what a name is worth financially or socially, and as a means of cheap social exchange. As with the paper currency, names have become surfaces, which have become separated from their human origins.

Mr Boffin is introduced in the novel when he introduces himself to Silas Wegg in Chapter 5, Book the First. In the narrative, he is called 'the stranger', 'the gentleman' and 'Mr Boffin' (90-1); Boffin himself says: '"My name's Boffin"', and "Do you like the name of Nicodemus?"' (91) and

> "Noddy Boffin," said the gentleman, "Noddy. That's my name. Noddy — or Nick — Boffin." (92)

In asking, '"Did you ever hear of the name of Boffin [...] Do you like it? [...] "Do you like the name of Nicodemus?" Think it over. Nick, or Noddy"' (91), Boffin presents a panoramic view of all the different aspects of his identity. This is an attempt to establish that Wegg already has full knowledge of him, through having knowledge of his various names. Wegg, however, can find no meaning in these names, because he has yet to find out what Boffin is really worth, not in terms of his individual human qualities, but in terms of money. Boffin, too, has yet to discover what Wegg is really like, and yet, it is with great rapidity that he takes

Wegg to his heart and to his hearth. Boffin's business-like introduction, '"My name's Boffin"', is almost immediately followed up by his announcing his Christian name. Having revealed himself more fully, Nicodemus Boffin places Wegg on even more familiar terms, by his disclosure that he is also known by the dimunitive 'Nick', and by the term of endearment, 'Noddy'. Although Nicodemus suggests a formal character with an ancient history (the Nicodemus of the New Testament who assisted Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of Christ), this idea is somewhat at odds with his 'comically ambling' form (90). On the other hand, 'Noddy' is in accord with his 'bright, eager, childishly-inquiring grey eyes' (90), and with the fact that he is illiterate, for a 'noddy' is both an adjective ('foolish, silly') and a verb ('to make a fool of'). Although this name encapsulates Boffin's foolish trust in Wegg, and his being fooled by Wegg, there are hidden depths to Boffin's character. Wegg, however, attaches a different value to Boffin's names. He thinks Boffin is noddy, attempts to noddy him, and to treat him as if he was nobody.

By presenting Boffin's various names, of which some are appropriate and others are ironically inappropriate, Dickens conveys the complexity of an individual's identity, which the social world of the novel attempts to convert into money and gossip. The stages of intimacy and the variety of personalities with which Boffin presents himself — Boffin, Nicodemus, Nick, or Noddy —, are lost by his being popularly called, 'The Golden Dustman' (180). This coinage is a kind of transfiguration of Boffin's character, that is, his 'jollity and enjoyment', as

expressed through his 'shining countenance'. Boffin has been made into an object of 'worshipping admiration'. The social world of *Our Mutual Friend* has apostasised. Whilst Moses is on the mountain, Aaron makes a golden calf; the sons of Israel worship it and give it sacrifice (Exodus 32:8). 'Here is an immense fortune drops from the clouds', says Wegg of Boffin's inheritance (352): 'Yahweh descended in the form of a cloud' in order to give Moses the Ten Commandments (34:5). Mrs Podsnap has 'a majestic head-dress in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings' (52). The only interest taken in other people, and the only account people expect to have to give of themselves, is one rated in pounds, shillings and pence.

Although names reveal and conceal the complexity of a human individual, in the social world of *Our Mutual Friend*, names have often been reduced to the status of commodities, out of which can be got — as can be got out of dust-mounds, or corpses — something which is of financial and social value. Although the currency of names has become devalued in human terms, in so far as names do not always evoke a living person, yet the monetary and social worth which now attaches to names, means that they now have an added value, and take on 'an imaginary power'. When Wittgenstein considered the philosphical conundrum of 'what's in a name?', he observed that

> the occult appearance of the process of thinking [means that it is possible] to think of a man who isn't present [...] to imagine him, "mean him" in a remark [...] even if he is thousands of miles away or dead. [10]

Since names in *Our Mutual Friend* have become commodities, this process of thinking does not make present a man, but what the man represents in financial and social terms. Wegg is one who confounds having control of a name with having control over what attaches to that name. Wegg always spoke of the house outside which he set up his choice collection of half-penny ballads, as 'Our House', and he gave its 'inmates...[] names of his own invention' (88). As a result, he believed that he 'exercised [...] imaginary power' over the house, its inhabitants, and their affairs. When in league with Venus, Wegg refers to Boffin as 'Him that shall be nameless' (352). Although Wegg attempts to convey his lack of respect for Boffin, he has, at the same time, also conferred a kind of Biblical status upon him, as if to utter the name is to invoke his physical presence and the power of money which accrues to it. Thus, although the commodification of names appears to be a way of bringing the living and the dead under control, Dickens reveals that a name holds more than can be valued in 'the three letters L. S. D.' (324), or a shining reputation. In presenting the ways in which names have become commodities, Dickens also renews the power which names can have as summonses, making a loved one present, or reclaiming a man from the margin between death and life. When Wrayburn is wandering in those endless places, he muttered 'Lizzie...millions of times' (809). As a result, Lightwood realises that Wrayburn wishes to marry her, and goes to fetch her. When she is physically present, Wrayburn asks her to '"speak to me by my name"', when she sees him 'wandering away'. His own name uttered by her, has the power to recall him to himself, not as he was, but with a new and fuller

sense of who he is and might yet become. This centering of the identity on a name, recovers a name's full weight: a name is no longer a mere surface, as it no longer denotes an object which is not possessed of human characteristics.

A corpse presents us with what we all become ('we are all alike in death'). The identification of a corpse provides an answer to the Inspector's question to Harmon as Handford, '"Who do you think it might have been?"'. A corpse, like a name, is a surface, but an enigmatic surface, which rebuffs the question of what has become of all that makes up an individual which is not mere flesh and bone. This rebuff, furthermore, raises the question of the precise nature of that vanished quality or quantity. Dickens' description of the finding of Gaffer Hexam's corpse, brings together the various names by which he had been known — 'Gaffer', 'the bird of prey' and 'Father' —, and this juxtaposition of the fragments of his social identity, stresses the dissolution or elusiveness of that identity. All these terms are now redundant, in so far as he is now beyond the reaches of human comprehension and love, and has become a plaything of the elements. The wind which 'cruelly taunts him', treats his corpse with derision, in contrast with human sentiment, which would usually accord the remains of the dead, tenderness and respect, in acknowledgement of past bonds. The wind 'sweeps jeeringly over Father', not only because it reduces him to, and treats him as, an object, in the same way that he regarded and treated corpses as objects, when at work. Part of the gravity of the passage, is that it is more than simply pathetic. In the treatment of Hexam's

corpse by the elements, Dickens evokes a sense of rough justice in what happens to Hexam. Dickens does not shrink from the fact that Hexam was coarsened by his trade. 'Did you never see such a shape soaked into your boat?', recalls the opening incident of the novel, and Hexam's lack of sentiment, fellow feeling, superstition, or curiosity about his catch as human remains:

> A neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it [the body that he had in tow] were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face; but Gaffer was no neophyte and had no fancies. (47)

The wind which jeers at the dead Gaffer, also jeers at the on-lookers. Death makes a mockery of us all. Gaffer's corpse, as with all corpses, presents a surface ('the form of the bird of prey'). The finding and naming of a corpse only solves one level of the mystery of human identity, past, present and to come, with which death confronts us. The ambiguous nature of a corpse, both reveals and conceals the complexity of an individual's identity. Although Hexam's corpse provides answers — the fact of his death, and how he died — he is 'voiceless' (202) about the Great Mystery of Death, and 'the suspense and mystery' which surrounds the whereabouts of the departed spark of life. These are questions 'never to be answered...upon the earth-side of the grave.' (221) What happens to the human individual once the spark has departed, remains unrevealed. Thus, the fact that there are no answers about what happens after death, throws us back 'upon the earth-side of the grave', with the result that we should value and concentrate on what we do know, that is, what makes us living human beings.

In a letter written in January 1845, Dickens remarked that

> the main usefulness and purpose of Death, is to make us fonder of each other, and to bind us together the more closely during the brief term of our existence here.''

At all levels of the social world of *Our Mutual Friend*, however, such bonds have been weakened, or dissolved, by the worship, desire or even pinching necessity for money. The ways in which human individuals, both living and dead, are treated as objects, and used for trade, carries a moral lesson. In recognition of our common humanity, and thus, our common mortality, we might 'find good standing-room left for a little sentiment'. Since we are all alike in death, we are all mutual friends. For Dickens, it this basic fellow feeling which constitutes humanity: if we do not register sentiment, then a 'deadness [...] steals over' us (566). It is perhaps ironic that so complex and sprawling a novel as *Our Mutual Friend*, should have at its heart, so simple a commonplace.

III

MERE CEREMONY

> Were we to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here too nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old natural methods. Everything has its cunningly devised implements, its pre-established apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery.
>
> *Signs of the Times* (1829), Thomas Carlyle[1]

The mourning and funeral customs of the Victorian age were particularly elaborate, especially when compared with the paucity of such customs today. Although these customs might help to give structure to the bereaved at times of disorganization, this is not to say that all the Victorians found them altogether or generally satisfactory, or indeed, helpful. Dickens presents a satirical attack on respectable middle class funerals, in his article, *From the Raven* (from *Household Words*, 8 June 1850):

> First of all, two dressed-up fellows came — trying to look sober, but they couldn't do it — and stuck themselves outside the door. There they stood for hours, with a couple of crutches covered over with drapery; cutting their jokes on the company as they went in, and breathing such strong rum and water into our establishment over the way, that the Guinea-Pig (who has a poor little head) was drunk in ten minutes. You are so proud of your humanity. Ha, ha! As if a pair of respectable crows wouldn't have done it much better!
>
> By and by, there came a hearse and four, and then two carriages and four; and on the tops of 'em, and on all the horses' heads, were plumes of feathers, hired at so much per plume; and everything, horses and all, was covered over with black velvet, till you couldn't see it. Because there were not feathers enough yet, there was a fellow in the procession, carrying a board of 'em on his head, like Italian images; and there were about five-and-twenty or thirty fellows (all hot and

> red in the face with eating and drinking) dressed up in scarves and hat-bands, and carrying — shut-up fishing-rods, I believe — who went draggling through the mud, in a manner that I thought would be the death of me; while the "Black Jobmaster" — that's what he calls himself — who let the coaches and horses to a furnishing undertaker, who had let 'em to a haberdasher, who had let 'em to a carpenter, who had let 'em to the parish-clerk, who had let 'em to the sexton, who had let 'em to the plumber painter and glazier who had got the funeral to do, looked out of the public-house window at the corner, with his pipe in his mouth, and said — for I heard him — "That was the sort of turn-out to do a gen-teel party credit." That! As if any two-and sixpenny masquerade, tumbled into a vat of blacking, wouldn't be quite as solemn, and immeasurably cheaper![2]

As Ruth Richardson has pointed out, 'many of the constituent elements of the Georgian and Victorian bourgeois funeral were derived from the heraldic funerals of earlier generations, originally the preserve of the nobility'.[3] Thus, originally, the 'two dressed-up fellows', known as mutes, were the two porters of the castle; the man wearing a scarf at the head of the procession was a herald-at-arms; the man carrying a board of feathers on his head was an esquire, and the pall-bearers with batons ('shut-up fishing-rods'), were the representatives of knights-companions-at-arms. Dickens felt that 'this nonsensical mockery' was caused by 'you who are not the poor', wanting to be considered one of 'the gen-teel party'. In other words, a respectable funeral, with its expensively pretentious allusions to the funerals of the nobility, was a means by which the expanding middle classes could assert their financial and social status. As Richardson has shown, although death had always served as a rite for the statement of social place, what was new and particular to the Victorian age, was the growth and consolidation of undertaking as a profession.[4] Undertakers were able to purvey services which suited the pockets

and aspirations of the newly rich. As the opening editorial of the *The Undertakers' & Funeral Directors' Journal and Monumental Masons' Review (a monthly record devoted to the Funeral Trades and Allied Industries)* of 22 October 1887, observed:

> In everything connected with funeral observances — mourning garments, memorial cards, wreaths, caskets, monuments, — every possible taste can be ministered to by the clever professional men who specially devote themselves to these various matters.[5]

Those who had money enough could meet these observances, by being ministered to by clever professional men, such as 'Jay's, The London General Mourning Warehouse, Regent Street', 'Shelley & May, Manufacturers of Every Description of Coffin Furniture', and 'Millward & Co., Bloomsbury (The Only Authorized and Official Masons & Sculptors to the Abney Park Cemetery)'.[6] For Dickens, however, such men were 'clever' because of their ability to play upon the gentility of the middle classes for profit:

> "Hearse and four, Sir?" says he [the plumber painter and glazier come to take the funeral order] "No, a pair will be sufficient." "I beg your pardon, Sir, but when we buried Mr Grundy at number twenty, there was four on 'em, Sir; I think it right to mention it." "Well, perhaps there had better be four." "Thank you, Sir. Two coaches and four, Sir, shall we say?" "No. Coaches and pair." "You'll excuse me mentioning it, Sir, but pairs to the coaches, and four to the hearse, would have a singular appearance to the neighbours [...]" "Well! say four!"[7]

The Funeral Reform Association, founded in 1878, also felt that 'The hearse and its trappings, the plumes and the horses, / The coaches all black...Are all the devices of Mould and his men.../ made to exist for profit alone'.[8] The Raven's repetition of the phrase, 'who had let 'em to a...', re-enacts the way in which

mass production, and the sharing out of work among 'the clever professional men', meant that the sense of a funeral being an individual and personal expression of grief, was lost in the spirit of pecuniary speculation ('everything, horses and all, was covered over with black velvet, till you couldn't see it.') Mr Mould, the undertaker in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, is an embodiment not only of the dust to which a human body returns and also the earth of the grave. His name also suggests that the ceremonies of funerals were decaying or had decayed: all funerals were moulded according to the same design, or pattern — in Dickens' opinion, according to what would realise the most profit — and since all funerals looked the same, the sense of a funeral being an individual and affectionate tribute was lost.

In order to meet demand, mourning and funeral accoutrements had to be mass produced. Between 1852-61 the firm of Courtauld's produced 279,605 packets of crape; in 1856, sales of Whitby jet were valued at £20,000 a year; in 1843, there were 1025 undertakers in London alone, many of whom, as Dickens mentions in *From the Raven,* let out the work to large numbers of middle men, such as carpenters, haberdashers, and coffin furnishers.[9] That the drive for profit could dominate over personal care can also be seen in those London cemeteries which were formed, owned and managed by Joint Stock Companies. In 1837, The London Cemetery Company (which also owned Nunhead Cemetery), had bought the seventeen acres which makes up the Western side of Highgate Cemetery for £3,500. Even if each plot was sold at the lowest price of £2, 10s., then, by the time the land was filled, the

owners hoped to have realised a gross profit of at least £221,500.[10] When Edith Simcox visited Highgate Cemetery on 5 December 1878, one day after the funeral of her friend, George Lewes, she found that the management structures required to run such a vast speculation, meant that the particularity of her grief was at odds with the impersonality of the Cemetery's bureaucracy:

> Today I went to Highgate [...] It was hard to have to ask where the grave was — of cheerful officials who look it out in a book like house-agents — No 84 "in the dissenters' portion." I ask a gardener — with half-a-crown — to find it for me and he got a relenting clerk to come — then at last I was close by the desolate new mound. Two white wreaths were on the grave and I laid mine of heather between them [...] I asked the man how many graves they made each day — he said 5 or 6, sometimes 2, sometimes 10. I thought that was hardly enough to make them care so little. A funeral came while I was there — with nodding horse plumes, the clergyman went away jovially before me — tapes were hanging down from the sleeves of his surplice.[10]

It was also the large number of burials a day at Highgate which rendered the particularity of a funeral to a somewhat offhand and commercial routine. Even locating the grave was a service which required a tip. After the interment of Tennyson's mother, Elizabeth, opposite the main gate of Highgate Cemetery on 25 February 1865, Tennyson wrote to his wife: 'A funeral came before us and a funeral followed. I could have wished for the country churchyard'.[11] Highgate had just seen its busiest year for burials. In 1864, there had been 2138 burials; an average of between five or six funerals a day.[12] An engraving of Highgate Cemetery from *The Pictorial Times*, 27 April 1844, shows a hearse and pair, accompanied by four walking attendants, who are all either approaching, or waiting their turn at, the main gate. Coming down the right-hand hill-road of the Cemetery, at

what seems to be something of a dash, is a mourning coach, presumably on its way from a funeral which has just taken place. That one funeral ran into the next — Tennyson's mother seems to have been one in a queue —, is redolent of a repetitive mechanical process, such as a conveyor belt. Indeed, this idea is embodied by the machinery which was installed in the Anglican chapel on the Western side of Highgate Cemetery, after the Eastern side was opened towards the end of 1850's:

> A bier stands at the west end [of the Chapel] which can be lowered through an aperture in the floor by hydraulic pressure. The object of this bier is to convey the coffin to a subterranean passage below, at the termination of the service in the chapel, so as to facilitate its conveyance to the new ground on the opposite side of the lane.[13]

Many had had high aspirations when private cemeteries were established around London. *The Builder* (1843), maintained that

> Cemeteries are scenes not only calculated to improve the morals and the taste, and by their botanical riches to cultivate the intellect, but they serve as historical records.[14]

The National Society for Preserving the Memorials of the Dead was founded in 1881 because 'the humblest tombstone is a link in the chain of local and family history'.[15] In 1843, J. C. Loudon's expression of the historical lesson provided by cemeteries, was similar to Lyell's ideas in his *Principles of Geology* (1830):

> If a name and date were graven in the stone, being protected from atmospheric changes, it would remain uninjured for ages, and, like the foot-marks which geologists have found in the red sandstone, might, in some distant age, become part of the geological history of our globe.[16]

As well as providing a lesson in human and physical history,

monuments also taught an instructive lesson about the passer-by's own mortality, the vanity of human wishes and of worldly ambition. Such an idea was long established. James Hervey in his *Meditations Among the Tombs* (1766), remarks how 'Relics and Names...taught me more of the Littleness of the World, than all the Volumes in my Library'.[17]

It was chiefly hoped, however, that in contrast to London churchyards, which had become 'hemmed-in...pestiferous and obscene',[18] the new garden cemeteries, such as those at Kensal Green and Highgate, would contain monuments which would 'afford the most convincing tokens of a nation's progress in civilization and in the arts.'[19] In his volume, *Modern Tombs, Gleaned from the Public Cemeteries, of London* (1851), William Hakewill, Architect, asserted his belief that the designing of tombs and funeral monuments should be regarded as a department of Fine Art. Hakewill, however, was dismayed and disappointed to see 'that nought save a spirit of pecuniary speculation was the chief incentive to these undertakings'.[20] He bemoaned the fact that the designing of tombs had been 'left to the untutored taste of the mere Mason and mechanic',[21] with the result that 'the artistic reputation of the country has been seriously damaged'.[22]

> To a lover of art, nothing can be more painful than a visit to the Cemeteries of our metropolis; such tameness and insipidity, outrageous ugliness, and vulgar sentiment are displayed in the heaps of stone and marble strewed over the surface of the ground in those establishments.[23]

Tombs also were mass-produced and could be selected from the catalogues of stone masons. As Hakewill pointed out, a person

wishing to have a design for a tomb tended to apply to

> some jobbing mason, in whose company he pays a visit to one or more of the Cemeteries, and there selects a tomb for the model of that which he intends to erect; and desires his confederate the mason to copy it, or to adapt it to his, the employer's views[24]

As a result,

> There are certain classes of tombs which are frequently reproduced, *viz*: the *broken column*, the *draped vase*, and the *obelisk*; it will be enough to touch upon these, and to show how ill these subjects have been treated, to convey an idea of the wretchedly low state of art exhibited in our Cemeteries generally. The *broken column*, not a very easy subject to render artistic, possesses nevertheless the charm of sentiment, if properly applied. A column is a support: the fractured column then represents the support gone, — hence this emblem is full of meaning if erected to a parent, the head and support of a family, but ceases to convey any meaning, nay, becomes an absurdity, when applied at random, and made to commemorate the death of a child, which we see is often the case. The *draped vase* is a subject which, in the hands of a tutored artist may be made both a very elegant object and, the means of conveying appropriate sentiment; but it may be rendered both unmeaning and repulsive in the hands of a bungler [...] The *Obelisk*, another favourite subject, has not fared better than the preceding examples.[25]

Since Hakewill's main criteria are semantic — the meaning or meaninglessness of emblems — and also aesthetic, he does not take into account the feelings of the bereaved. He thought it 'a very vulgar practice' to paint the lettering or inscriptions on the tombs jet black, because this gave undue importance 'to a portion of the composition which is of a purely mechanical nature'.[26] And yet, what in Hakewill's eyes was 'rendered offensively prominent', might well be the most important portion of a monument for the bereaved.[27] When the feelings of the bereaved are imagined, a broken column for the death of a child, can be seen to be full of meaning, for it could be seen as a symbol of incompleteness, the

beginning of a noble form, represented, for example, by an Ionic column, which has been broken off prematurely. In addition, such an emblem could also represent, particularly if the mother died giving birth, the end of a family line. What Hakewill does not allow to cloud his criticism of funeral art, is that although the use of some emblems might appear to have been 'applied at random', yet for the bereaved, such emblems might have a wholly personal meaning that cannot be fully articulated and comprehended even by the bereaved parents. Although the use of a broken column could have resulted from artistic ignorance, it can also be imagined as a poignant attempt by the bereaved parents to find an adequate and suitably plaintive form. The frequent use of a broken column, can be seen as the bereaved having to make do with, or adapt to already existing funeral emblems. Rather than commissioning an individual and possibly esoteric and extremely costly design, the bereaved drew on the community of mourning which such common emblems as a broken column represent, but which frequent reproduction had rendered commonplace, and therefore, seemingly trite.

In 1885 Oscar Wilde wrote to the Funeral Reform Association, claiming that

> The urns, pyramids and sham sarcophagi (ugly legacies from the 18th century to us) are meaningless as long as we do not burn or embalm our dead. If we are to have funeral memorials at all, far better models are to be found in the beautiful crosses of Ireland — such as the cross at Montasterboice — or in the delicate bas-reliefs in the Greek tombs.[28]

In fact, a sarcophagus is not a wholly 'meaningless' emblem when

it is remembered that in Greek, sarcophagi means flesh-eater (Greek sarcophagi were made of limestone, an agent which quickly reduces the flesh, and had drainage holes so they could be reused after the bones had been removed). Wilde's objection to urns, pyramids and sarcophagi is not so much aesthetic ('ugly') as utilitarian and semantic: such emblems 'are meaningless as long as we do not burn or embalm'. Although this suggests that funerary architecture should be appropriate to funerary practice (burn = urn), and possibly also to belief, Wilde goes on to allow 'the delicate bas-reliefs in the Greek tombs'. His criteria now become more aesthetic: he deplores what he considers is a want of taste and of artistic simplicity; he longs for the 'noble symbol', as opposed to 'ostentation' and 'elaborate... extravagance'. He countenances the bas-reliefs, because they are 'delicate', and yearns for the 'beautiful crosses of Ireland', more for the fact that they are simple and beautiful, rather than because of any specific religious significance which they might possess.

Augustus Pugin, the architect, also condemned contemporary funeral monuments. In his *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843), he declares:

> Surely the Cross must be the most appropriate emblem on the tombs of those who profess to believe in God crucified for the redemption of man; and it is almost incredible, that while the dead are interred in consecrated ground, and in the ancient position [...] the types of all modern sepulchral monuments should be essentially pagan: and urns, broken pillars, extinguished lamps, inverted torches and sarcophagi, should have been substituted for recumbent effigies, angels and emblems of mercy and redemption[29]
>
> [...] new Cemetery Companies have perpetrated the grossest absurdities in the buildings they have erected. Of course there are a superabundance of inverted torches, cinerary urns,

> and pagan emblems, tastefully disposed by the side of neat gravel walks, among cypress trees and weeping willows[30]

Again, it is frequent repetition and random application which has rendered these emblems meaningless 'absurdities'. Pugin's contempt for this, is apparent in his choice of the word 'superabundance', which conveys a sense of discordant clutter, similar to the kind of bric-a-brac that could often be found in Victorian middle class drawing-rooms. Even the landscape upon which these monuments were strewn had been suburbanised. *Payne's Illustrated London* observed that Highgate Cemetery

> is a spot of surpassing beauty and like its compeer (Kensal Green) most tastefully arranged with trees and flowers. We do not wish to be cynical; but really if the teapot and the Muffin were but introduced, these entrances to Hades might well be taken for two suburban tea-gardens. The gardens of both cemeteries are open to the public during the whole day, and are well deserving of the visit.[31]

[illegible] public parks until [illegible], Highgate Cemetery provided a beautiful alternative to London parks: 'the gardens, as we may not inappropriately call the grounds, are daily filled with persons, evidently enjoying the quiet, the pure air, and the splendid landscape'.[32]

It was these kinds of genteel attitudes, which lacked a religious basis and conviction as well as an artistic sensibility, which the new cemetery companies had catered for and encouraged. The superabundance of monuments not only mocks the cemetery's attempts to make all 'tastefully disposed' and 'neat', but it is also a direct result of their being a purely secular and commercial enterprise. Indeed, many 'churchman' felt these new

cemeteries were 'a modern and unecclesiastical innovation, adapted, like our farces and fashions, secondhand from revolutionary Paris'.[33] Because Pugin is speaking as a Roman Catholic convert and a Gothic Revivalist, his criticism is rather narrow. What he refuses to allow is the possibility that these 'pagan emblems' had been or could have been partly Christianised. Like pyramids, obelisks were originally part of the Egyptian solar cult of Heliopolis. It might be surmised therefore, that the obelisk's representation of the sun's rays coming down to earth could be seen as a symbol of eternal light, and so of faith in the Resurrection. In addition, it is also possible to view an obelisk as an architectural echo of the form of a Church spire: the eyes are led heavenwards, in much the same way as they are by a pointing angel — in one case at Highgate Cemetery, this idea is given further credence by an angel-like figure which rests on the top of an obelisk, pointing heavenwards.

It is not surprising that the search for funeral emblems involved borrowings from antiquity. As Pugin admitted, Egyptian emblems were generally employed 'probably from some associations between the word catacombs [...] and the discoveries of Belzoni on the banks of the Nile.'[34] Egyptian monuments then, could evoke a sense of permanence, for what had chiefly remained from the Egyptian civilization — as another contemporary explorer, Sir Charles Fellows (buried at Highgate) had discovered —, were their monuments to the dead. In the first year that Highgate was opened (1839-40), the average age of death of people buried there was 36 years old. Having a large monument which used Egyptian

emblems therefore, was not only a symbol of regret but also a means of making what was a relatively short life, seem rather more significant. This can be seen most touchingly on an inscription on a pyramid in the Western side of Highgate Cemetery, near Comfort's Corner (so called because a number of people of that name are buried there):

In Memory of William Fairlam Oakley
Son of William and Charlotte Oakley
Died July 5th 1839
Aged 1 year and 9 months

It might be imagined that the fact that this monument is only six feet high is an indication of the short life which it commemorates. On the other hand, it could also be seen as a specific example of what Hakewill and Pugin saw as a general trend. What had once been an originally prodigious form, which amazes the intellect through the immensity of its size, had been reduced in its effect and meaning.[35] That the monument had suffered this loss through a kind of domestication, is perhaps partially confirmed by the fact that employees of the Cemetery Company used to refer to Oakley's tomb by the affectionate diminutive, 'The Sugar Loaf'.[36]

Another reason for using pyramids and Greek house tombs, is that these emblems recalled these civilizations' beliefs in an after-life. That there are numerous vaults at Highgate, and that the entrances to those in the Egyptian Avenue and the Lebanon Circle are deliberately Egyptian, can be seen as an expression of a literal belief in the resurrection of the body. Vaults are where

the dead resided in anticipation of the last trump, and so they can be compared to resting places, or to lodges between this world and the next. Since these vaults were occupied mostly by the nouveau riche, they became a way of establishing a family's prestige and status. Vaults recalled the private vaults and family mausoleums which the landed aristocracy had on their estates, and in which they had been buried for generations. In this way, it was possible to suggest a kind of aristocratic lineage, as the Veneerings in *Our Mutual Friend* attempt to do, when they get the Herald's College to find them a 'new coat of arms'.[37] Indeed, not only do some vaults at Highgate have coats of arms above the entrance, but a number even bear the family's complete address.

In contrast to the conventional epitaph, which bids the passer-by to stop and pause and reflect on the passing of life, these notices, which are rather like visiting cards, or the inscriptions hung over businesses, announce the family's social and financial status, in much the same way that the pomp and expense of the funeral could. Such inscriptions inform the world that the deceased had not only enjoyed an expensive and exclusive address when they were alive — such as, '21 Fitzroy Square', or '54 Porchester Terrace' —, but they continued to do so after their death: their new address being, 'The Egyptian *Avenue*, Highgate Cemetery'. This idea was reflected by a magazine of the time, *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, which described these tombs as 'apartments...furnished with stone shelves...capable of containing 12 coffins, in addition to those

which could be placed on the floor'.[36] Undertakers, moreover, could have provided the necessary 'Coffin furniture'.

The bereaved's wish to have their deceased buried in a prominent position became part of *The Rules, Orders and Regulations of the London Cemetery Company* (1916). Number 14 stated that

> Where exclusive right of burial has been purchased either in a Grave or Vault within 20ft. of any road, a Monument must be erected; but in remoter distances Grave-stones will be allowed.

Such a stipulation could be financially advantageous to both the local stone masons and the Company. It helped to make the purchase of a vault seem like rather a good investment, particularly for a large family, for as its members died, no new grave space (which might in any case be a long way from the old), or monument had to be purchased. Instead, the existing vault could be re-opened, and room made for another occupant.

That vaults and monuments came to be thought of as property, can be seen in the first novel of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*, The Man of Property, when, on 1 October 1886, Aunt Ann is buried in the family vault at Highgate:

> The service in the chapel over, the mourners filed up again to guard the body to the tomb. The vault stood open, and, round it, men in black were waiting.
>
> From that high and sacred field, where thousands of the upper middle classes lay in their last sleep, the eyes of the Forsytes travelled down across the flocks of graves. There, spreading to the distance, lay London, with no sun over it, mourning with this family, so dear, the loss of her who was mother and guardian. A hundred thousand spires and houses, blurred in the great grey web of property, lay there like prostrate worshippers at the grave of this, the oldest Forsyte of them all.
>
> A few words, a sprinkle of earth, the thrusting of the

> coffin home, and Aunt Ann had passed to her last rest.
> Round the vault, trustees of that passing, the five brothers stood, with white heads bowed; they would see that Ann was comfortable where she was going. Her little property must stay behind, but otherwise, all that could be should be done.[39]

It is not only the spires and houses which have become blurred. There is also a blurring between the Cemetery and the City beyond, as Highgate's graves merge with the houses of London. This blurring of the Necropolis with the Metropolis is also established in the way that 'the great grey web of property' of London merges with the property of the Forsyte family vault, and the 'little property' of Aunt Ann,. The Forsytes' attempt to make sure that 'all that could be should be done', suggests a feeling that the funeral was both rather perfunctory and also a form of display: the phrase is reminiscent of Mr Mould's claim, after the funeral of old Jonas Chuzzlewit, that, 'everything that money could do was done...nothing in the world...can do more'.[40] So it was that Julius Beer, in 1876, paid nearly £6000 for his mausoleum, and at one time, the London Cemetery Company would declare that it 'undertakes by sealed deeds, to maintain Graves, and the monuments thereon, in perpetuity, upon payment of a sum'. 'In perpetuity', creates a false sense of permanence: the Company which owned Highgate Cemetery was declared bankrupt in 1975 ('in perpetuity' has now come to mean no more than 70 years). The London Cemetery Company's grand claim is a species of vain-glory, which also finds its expression in the monuments and cemetery buildings. Highgate Cemetery's impressive looking Egyptian Gateway is flanked by paired attached columns with lotus bud capitals carrying entablature with gorged moulding; at each side is a free-standing

obelisk, about 20 feet high. The Gateway, however, is only a brick edifice covered with layers of Portland cement, which had been gradually crumbling, until recently restored. For the same reason, the Lebanon Circle, an area containing twenty family catacombs sunk into the side of the hill around a cedar tree, now resembles Miss Havisham's bride-cake. As the roots of the tree have penetrated its apparently solid surface, so some of the inscriptions which list the names of the occupants have fallen away.

Despite the possibility of personal meaning being found in seemingly incongruous emblems, the increasingly commercialised process of producing funeral monuments and conducting funeral practices inevitably tended towards depersonalisation. Thus, funeral and mourning customs which had once had specific meanings, were felt to have been rendered most unmeaning, by their general and random application. Dickens felt that it was incongruous for the middle classes, and particularly ruinous for the poor, to employ obsequies which derived from the aristocratic funerals of the past. The Committee which in 1843, reported on 'the Practice of Interment in Towns' agreed. Dickens maintained that not only was it vain and ridiculous for the middle classes to pretend they were eminently aristocratic through the use of 'hired velvets, and feathers, and scarves, and all the rest of it', but that these obsequies were in themselves nonsensical. Mass production and servile imitation had separated them from their original meanings. The two porters of the castle, with their staves at the funeral of a man of rank, had originally communicated the status of deceased.

The widespread application and servile imitation of this custom, however, had rendered it a 'nonsensical mockery'. At the Blacksmith's forge, for the funeral of Mrs Joe in Chapter 35 of *Great Expectations*, there were

> Two dismally absurd persons, each ostentatiously exhibiting a crutch done up in a black bandage — as if that instrument could possibly communicate any comfort to anybody — [who] were posted at the front door.[41]

Funeral customs which had once communicated how much sorrow a survivor might feel, were felt to have become ostentatious and meaningless. Dickens dismissed 'mutes' and other professional mourners, as 'mere people of ceremony, who cared no more for the Dead Man than the hearse did'.[42] An anonymous supporter of The Funeral Reform Association felt that

> We might question the properties black crape possesses,
> For showing how much a survivor may feel,
> And ask in what way 'tis a hat-band expresses
> The sorrow jet jewelry helps to reveal?
> And might query how far as mere matter of show,
> The wearing of meaningless mourning can go?[43]

Rather than being a proper vehicle for expressing sorrow, then, funeral and mourning customs had become a 'mere matter of show'[44]; like Hamlet's 'that which passes show, / [...] the trappings and the suits of woe' (I. ii.85-6). The size and expense of a funeral became not only a means of expressing social status; as the *Undertaker's and Funeral Director's Review and Monumental Masons' Review* implied, the lack of a respectable funeral could be interpreted as the bereaved's lack of reverence, regard and affection for the deceased:

> We have clothed ourselves in decent mourning raiment, we have

> not spared our means to lay them in the dust with all due reverence and regard, we have reared over each loved one's grave the simple headstone or the more costly monument, and have laid the floral wreath or cross upon the silent tomb, as an affectionate tribute to those who have passed away.[45]

Although the customs of Victorian mourning and funerals could be a means of expressing affection, reverence and regard, Dickens maintained that an ostentatious, pretentious and expensive funeral display did not set the poor a good example: besides making funerals 'unnecessarily expensive'[46] it 'taught 'em to confound expense and show, with respect and affection'.[47] Dickens' view that it was was more of a reverent and affectionate tribute to do less, is shared by the anonymous supporter of The Funeral Reform Association:

> It is all very well a few blossoms to proffer,
> As tributes of love to a friend who has died;
> But when a be-wired costly wreath 'tis we offer,
> It becomes not a proof of affection, but pride.[48]

The Undertakers' and Funeral Directors' Journal and Monumental Masons' Review replied to the declarations of the Funeral Reform Association in the same way that it had attacked the trade. The Review called the Association's pronouncements, 'genuine cant and absurd nonsense'.[49]

> When we leave off all outward signs of sorrow we shall probably cease to feel it.[50]

Dickens maintained that all the outward signs of sorrow had, in fact, ceased to communicate how much a survivor might feel. In Chapter 9 of *David Copperfield*, Mr Omer, 'DRAPER, TAILOR, HABERDASHER, FUNERAL FURNISHER &c.', calls David's 'attention to

his stock in trade, and to certain fashions which he said had "just come up", and to certain other fashions which he said "had just gone out."'[51] In presenting mourning clothes as if they were just a matter of fashion — when death and grief in one sense never go out of fashion —, and as if they have a life and death of their own, Dickens reveals his belief that such general items were at odds with a sense of personal loss. David Copperfield is, in fact, 'too sorrowful' to debate such matters, and Omer has his way.[52] Although conventions attempt to give form and shape to grief, or sympathetic grief, there was a felt disparity between the depth of sorrow within, and its formality, 'outward appearance' (OED, 2). Mourning had become 'a mere matter of show', its customs, mere trappings ('external, superficial, and trifling decoration' OED, b), a species of 'hollowness and falsehood'.

Tennyson wrote to his wife on the morning of the funeral of his mother at Highgate Cemetery (25 February 1865):

> We all of us hate the pompous funeral we have to join in, black plumes, black coaches & nonsense. We should like all to go in white and gold rather — but convention is against us.[53]

The conventions of funerals — a rule or practice based upon general consent, or accepted and upheld by society at large —, had taken on 'a bad sense: Accepted usage become formal and artifical, and felt to be repressive of the natural in conduct or art' (OED, 9b). Tennyson's longing for white and gold, in direct contrast to the Western convention of black mourning clothes, has a

Hamlet-like perversity. The usual periods of time for wearing mourning dress were as follows: two years for a wife or husband; one year for a parent or child; six months for a brother, sister or cousin; three months for an aunt or uncle. The widow marked the death of her husband with full mourning for the first year in paramatta (a light dress fabric of merino wool and silk or cotton); for the next six months, in 'widow's silk', trimmed with crape; during the next three months the crape could be lightened, and jet and fringe be introduced.

> Twenty-one months after bereavement crape could be left off entirely — this was known as 'slighting' the mourning — and plain black worn; two years after the bereavement the widow could go into half-mourning for six months (grey, lavender, mauve, violet, or black, grey, and white strips; the change should be gradual).[54]

Similarly, the wearing of mourning jewellery passed through a gradation of colours, beginning with jet, and then, in later stages of mourning, gold and diamonds, pearls and amethyst.

The 'heavy solemnity' of mourning clothes, was deliberately restrictive for both the wearers and those who came into contact with them.[55] In *Middlemarch*, after the death of Mr Casaubon, Will Ladishaw 'never quite knew how it was that he saved himself from falling down at her [the widowed Dorothea Casaubon's] feet...He used to say that the horrble hue and surface of her crape dress was most likely the sufficient controlling force'.[56] Those who felt that such a convention was 'repressive of the natural', as Tennyson did at the funeral of his mother, were restricted further by the fact that it was a practice upheld by society at large. To

deviate from what was acccepted usage would appear unnatural, eccentric, and disrespectful. Thus, those wishing to express their sorrow according to their own individual wishes, could find themselves beaten down by convention.

The sense that funeral and mourning conventions were 'a mere matter of show' which had become empty of meaning, had serious implications for those contemplating a letter of condolence.

IV

COMMONPLACES

"Well you know what I mean, even though my words are badly selected and commonplace," she said impatiently, "Because I only utter commonplace words, you must not suppose I think only commonplace thoughts. My poor stock of words are like the limited number of rough moulds I have to cast all my materials in, good and bad; and the novelty and delicacy of the substance is often lost in the coarseness and triteness of the form."

Elfrife Swancourt in Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*[1]

It was, in the Victorian period, the convention for an old and or professedly attached friend of the bereaved and, or, the deceased, to send a letter of condolence. To do so was generally accepted as a profession of intimacy or friendship, a mark of love and sympathy. Therefore, not sending a letter of condolence would be interpreted as an act of unkindness, for it is a dereliction of one of the duties of kinship or friendship. As Cardinal Newman observed, after the death of his friend of thirty-two years standing, Father Ambrose St John, on 24 May 1875:

> my own friends and Ambrose St John's friends are most kind in writing to me on his death. I should be very sorry if they did not.[2]

As with the conventions of funerals and mourning, the convention of offering sympathy in the form of a letter of condolence is an outward and visible sign. It can, therefore, as with the trappings of funerals, be regarded as a surface. After the death of her lover, George Henry Lewes on 30 November 1879, George Eliot

spoke of the letters of condolence she had received as 'tender proofs of feeling'[3] and 'precious signs of sympathy'.[4] It took the Reverend Mark Pattison exactly seven weeks (18 January 1879) to write a letter of condolence to George Eliot after the death of Lewes:

> My dear Mrs Lewes
> I have forborne to intrude upon your sorrow with a letter, hitherto, because under such circumstances, anything that one can write has an air of formality and conventionalism, even when the sympathy is most sincere.[5]

The supporters of the Funeral Reform Association felt that the conventions of funerals and mourning were a 'mere matter of show'.[6] For Pattison, the conventions of a letter of condolence threatened to suffer the same fate, by their general application. His belated letter of condolence to the widowed George Eliot, makes explicit the feeling shared by many condolers: rather than being a vehicle for the expression of deeply felt sympathy, the conventions of offering condolences had become only a formality ('an outward appearance or semblance [of something]' OED, 2).

With the sending of a letter of condolence, the writer joins a community of condolers, in which many different voices are united in grief, offering condolences upon a single occasion.[7] This community is not only made up of the bereaved and those condoling on a single occasion in the present, but it is also made up of a vast perspective of condolers in the past. Since all these voices are condoling, or have condoled, on a similar kind of experience, the condolences offered are also of a similar kind.

Thus, a convention, in the sense of a 'general agreement' (OED, 9), can,through time and repetition, become conventional: both the method and the words used to offer sympathy have become codified. That many different voices shared the same public language can be seen in the letters of condolence studied here. Charles Peers wrote to Henry Hallam after his son, Arthur Hallam, died very suddenly in 1833:

> You may easily imagine our astonishment.[8]

On 30 July 1852, Dickens' friend, Richard Quin, wrote to tell him that Dickens' friend (and Quin's brother-in-law), Richard Watson, was 'at the point of death'. Dickens replied:

> I received your kind letter only this morning. I never in my life received one that so amazed and shocked me.[9]

In his letter of condolence written after the death of Frederick Locker's wife, Tennyson wrote:

> The shock must have been so terrible, just when things seemed better.[10]

Dickens felt that the servile imitation of the conventions of funerals and mourning had rendered them 'mere unmeaning forms'. The architect William Hakewill, in his *Modern Tombs Gleaned from the Public Cemeteries of London,* maintained that the random application and frequent reproduction of tomb designs produced an effect 'of the most unmeaning character'.[11] The conventions of offering condolences in the form of a letter can be seen to have suffered in much the same way. The coincidences of expression in

the above examples, highlight the difficultes implicit in conventions. Although these deaths were shocking, because they were sudden and unexpected, yet the expression of the particularity of each shock is bound by a convention. A single voice can be lost among the many, so that many voices can almost become a single voice. Although this might 'provide a sense...of timeless community including that between the living and the dead', it could also have a distancing and alienating effect.[12] That conventions are open to and used by all, means that they have become commonplaces: words which are 'everyone's and no one's'.[13] The conventional expressions of condolences constitute a received language in which the ability to mark different degrees of sincerity, or particularity, may be lost. Thus, the conventions of offering condolences, as with the conventions of funerals and mourning, could also suffer a kind of death: they could lose the sense of the individual personality which uttered them.

Tennyson was well aware that coincidences of expression were a quality of every utterance. On 21 November 1882, he replied to Samuel Edward Dawson's 'thoughtful essay' on *The Princess*:

> I do not object to your finding parallelisms. They must always occur. A man (a Chinese scholar) some time ago wrote to me saying that in an unknown, untranslated Chinese poem there were two whole lines of mine, almost word for word. Why not? Are not all human eyes all over the world looking at the same objects and must there not consequently be coincidences of thought and impressions and expressions? It is scarcely possible for anyone to say or write anything in this late time of the world to which, in the vast literature of the world, a parallel could not somewhere be found.[14]

A parallel rewritten in a post-structuralist idiom can be found in Barthes' *s/z*:

> Alongside each and every utterance one might say that off-stage voices can be heard: they are the codes: in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is "lost" in the vast perspective of the already written) de-originate the utterance.[16]

For Barthes, that an utterance suffers a loss of originality, is felt as a loss. An utterance cannot be wholly original; the origin of an utterance cannot be traced. Thus, the origin and originality of utterances have no permanence and cannot be retrieved. Tennyson, however, is not burdened by his sense of his age's belatedness and of the resulting inevitable common expression of common recurrence or repetition of experience across cultures and periods. Rather, he accepts, and is even consoled by, the thought that parallels of experience produce parallels of saying and writing. In contrast to Barthes' 'interweaving', Tennyson's 'parallelisms', suggests that the connection between saying and writing all over the world, now and in the past, is one which creates a sense of timeless community, in which expressions retain a sense of distinctness ('a parallel') and permanence ('be found'). This makes of literature a commemorative occasion: what seems to have passed away for ever is retained in literature, which thus becomes a repository and memorial of common experiences, preserving for retrieval a past that records common experiences in a community of expression.

With the publication of *In Memoriam* in June 1850, Tennyson, as a writer of a letter of condolence, was faced with potential parallelisms of his own making. In his draft letter of condolence to Princess Alice (on the death of her father, Prince Albert), Tennyson recorded that

> when I was some three or four years older than yourself I suffered what seemed to me to shatter all my life [the death of Arthur Hallam] so that I desired to die rather than live. And the record of my grief I put into a book; and <of this book> I continually receive letters from those who suffer telling me how great a solace this book has been to them. Possibly if by and by your R.H. would <look into this book> consider this record it might give you some comfort. I do not know. I only know that I write in pure sympathy with your affliction and that of your R. mother —[16]

Her 'R. mother' was Queen Victoria, who told Tennyson that she found 'some bits' of *In Memoriam* 'specially soothing'.[17] The success of *In Memoriam*, in terms of its sales and its ability to offer solace, made Tennyson not only an exemplary public mourner but also an exemplary public condoler. In his letter to Princess Alice, Tennyson is drawn back to 'this book': what comfort might be offered, he had already 'put into a book'.

In his letter of condolence to Queen Victoria (August 1883) after the death of her companion, John Brown, Tennyson is alive to the fact that 'the vast literature of the world', can make a condoler feel that the originality, and thus, perhaps, the sincerity of his sympathy, is lost: 'anything that one can write', anyone can write and has '<u>already written</u>'.

> I will not say that I am "loyal" or that your Majesty

> is "gracious", for these are old hackneyed terms used and abused by every courtier, but I *will* say that during our conversation I felt the touch of true friendship and sympathy which binds human beings together, whether they may be Kings or cobblers.'[18]

The quotation marks ('"gracious"' and '"loyal"') act as headstones, which mark the fact that the original depth and truth of such terms had become deadened or dead, through their general application. Since every courtier says that he is "loyal", 'the unworthiest shows as fairly in the mark', and it becomes difficult to distinguish between loyal and disloyal, gracious and ungracious, and therefore, sincere and insincere courtiers and condolers. That conventions have become conventional and commonplace means that a condoler's credit stands on such slippery ground that he might be judged one of two bad ways: either a coward or a flatterer. Alternatively, in Hamlet's perception, although 'the trappings and the suits of woe', are 'all forms, moods, shapes of grief / That can denote...They [are also] actions that a man might play' (I. ii. 82-6). That condolences were double edged is spoken of by Cardinal Newman, in his sermon, *Unreal Words*:

> many men when they come near persons in distress and wish to show sympathy, often condole in a very unreal way. I am not altogether laying this at their fault; for it is very difficult to know what to do, when on the one hand we cannot realize to ourselves the sorrow, yet withal wish to be kind to those who feel it. A tone of grief seems necessary, yet (if so be [*sic*]) cannot under our circumstances be genuine. Yet even here surely there is a true way, if we could but find it, by which pretence may be avoided, and yet respect and consideration shown.'[19]

A condoler has to remain in 'the vast perspective of the already

written'; 'he cannot frame a language for himself'. The difficulty facing the writer of a letter of condolence, therefore, was to find a true way to resurrect expressions which were felt to have suffered a death. To resort to servile imitation of the commonplaces of condolences would be a pretence and a mere ceremony.

A sentence in Conrad's *Nostromo* suggests that commonplaces might be resurrected:

> The value of a sentence is in the personality which utters it, for nothing new can be said by man or woman.[20]

The Reverend Pattison felt that the depth of the sincerity of his sympathy for the widowed George Eliot was lost in the coarseness and the triteness of the only accepted outward form through which such sympathy was bound to have its expression. Such conventions, however, as with those of funerals and mourning, as Newman hopes, can be made true and sincere, and real and effective. William Hakewill stated that

> A block of wood or stone, in the hands of an unartistic person, how great soever may be the mechanical skill that is brought to bear in hewing it into form, remains still a block, so far as the intent and purpose of art are concerned; but in the hands of a tutored artist, this same block becomes a living thing, — speaks a language, reveals sentiment, animates the spectator.[21]

It is the spirit, intention and skill with which a convention is employed, which makes it become 'a living thing [which] speaks a language [and] reveals sentiment'. This can be seen in the first

convention which faced the would-be condoler, as he faced the blank writing paper, namely, what form of address to use. In order to see how this could be used as a vehicle to mark the particularity of a condoler's friendship, love and sympathy, it is necessary to examine what form of address was commonly used. The following list presents the usual gradations of styling in ordinary forms of correspondence::

Sir	Madam
Dear Sir	Dear Madam
My Dear Sir	My dear Madam
	Dear Friend
Dear Mr Hallam	Dear Mrs Lewes
My dear Mr Hallam	My dear Mrs Evans
Dear Hallam	no comparable form
My dear Hallam	" " "
My Dear Mark	My dear Marianne

In contrast with 'Sir' of business letters, 'My dear Sir' indicates that a degree of personal acquaintance had been achieved. For example, although Dickens had never met the American Lewis Gaylord Clark, he had entered into a correspondence with him, promising to write a foreword to Clark's magazine. Thus, when Dickens wrote a letter of condolence to Clark on the death of Clark's twin-brother, he begins, 'My Dear Sir'.[22] 'My Dear Sir' can also be a sign of deferential respect. Dickens' letters of condolence to John Macrone (the publisher of *Sketches by Boz*),[23] to William Bradbury (Dickens's printer, and later his publisher),[24] and both his letters of condolence to George

Beadnell (the father of Dickens' first love),[25] all begin 'My Dear Sir'.

With the next gradation of styling (a surname together with the correct title), it is possible to see how the action of condoling affected a change. When writing to his friend, Mrs Watson, Dickens always addressed her as 'My dear Mrs Watson'. After the death of her husband and Dickens' friend, he begins his letter of condolence, 'My dear, dear Mrs Watson',[26] which marks the extra-ordinary nature of her condition and of his letter to her, as well as emphasising the measure of his feeling for both the bereaved and also the deceased, with whom he had been very intimate since 1846.

Men correspondents would usually have to be requested to perform the next gradation in the form of address, namely, the dropping of the 'Mr' and the use of the surname. The title was never dropped between women, or when a man wrote to a woman correspondent. Tennyson's tenth letter to the Duke of Argyll, dated 25 February 1862, has the following postcript:

> If you call me Mr. Tennyson any longer, I think I must Your Grace you till the end of the chapter.[27]

The Duke admitted that 'My dear Mr Tennyson' was 'abominably incongruous',[28] and in response to Tennyson's request, the Duke began his next letter, dated 27 February 1862, 'My dear — Tennyson'.[29] Tennyson, however, continued to begin his letters,

'My dear Duke', just as he had always done. Dickens, in his first two letters of condolence to his friend, William Macready (he wrote three letters of condolence to Macready on different occasions), adopts the form, 'My Dearest Macready'. This is an important variation, since before the death of Macready's daughter in 1850, Dickens only used this form when writing to Macready four times. The significance of this can be illustrated by way of Dickens' usual form of addressing Macready.

John Forster introduced Dickens to William Macready, the leading tragic actor of his day, on 16 June 1837. The first two surviving letters written by Dickens to Macready both begin 'My Dear Sir'.[30] Until Dickens' second letter of condolence to Macready on 5 October 1852, Dickens writes 'My Dear Macready'. Out of one hundred and eighteen letters to Macready, there are only nine letters which do not begin in this way. One letter begins 'My Dear Friend', in an attempt to sort out a misunderstanding between them; two letters have no formal start, and two are humorous letters (one begins 'Unhappy man',[31] the other, written as a jest in the style of a lawyer's request, begins 'Sir'[32]).

Apart from Dickens' first two letters of condolence to Macready, there are only two other letters which begin 'My Dearest Macready'. Dickens arrived at this form of address via two uses of an intermediary form 'My Very Dear Macready'. On 14 October 1844, Dickens, who had then been in Italy for three months, wrote to Macready, whom he thought had already left America (although he

did not do so until later in October). The letter begins:

> My Very Dear Macready
> My whole heart is with you *at home*. I have not yet felt so far off, as I do now — when I think of you there — and cannot fold you in my arms.[33]

It was the feeling of physical absence which induced this change in Dickens' normal form of address: 'My Very Dear' is consonant with Dickens' 'whole heart'.

The hint of a further separation prompted Dickens' only other use of 'My Very Dear Macready'. In a letter dated 17 May 1846, Dickens thanked Macready for saying that he had been 'much distressed' to learn that Dickens intended to go to Switzerland.[34]

The first use of 'My Dearest Macready' was on 28 November 1844. When Dickens arrived in Paris on this day, he thought Macready was preparing to open his season at the Theatres des Italien. Here, the sense of physical absence which they had felt for a five month spell, seemed as though it was about to come to an end. This resulted in a rush of emotion, which partly made itself felt in Dickens' change of styling:

> My Dearest Macready
>
> I have been travelling for weeks, and have not been five minutes in Paris, on my way to London — after a 50 hours' spell in a horrible coach. Are you at Meurice's? If you are, I shall come and rush into your arms — as soon as I am clean enough — unless you anticipate me by coming here and rushing into mine. I go on to London at 8 tomorrow morning.
> Affecy. Ever & Ever[35]

In fact, Macready had been delayed in London. In Dickens' second letter, written a few hours later, the tone is more subduded. Now its opening, 'My Dearest Macready', bears the pain of disappointment: 'It is painfully clear to me', Dickens wrote, 'that I shall not hug you tonight'.[36]

That 'My Dearest Macready' is an attempt to recover the lost physical contact of friendship also makes itself felt in both of Dickens' letters of condolence to Macready. On the death of Macready's daughter in February 1850, Dickens wrote:

> My Dearest Macready.
> I write these words to you, as I should silently press your hand if I were by.[37]

After the death of Macready's wife, Dickens, who was then in Boulogne, wrote a letter of condolence, dated 5 October 1852, beginning 'My Dearest Macready', and containing the sentence: 'As I would press your hand in your distress, I let this note go from me'.[38] On both these occasions, the pressure of not being able to press Macready's hand makes itself felt in the way that the usual 'My Dear' is extended to 'My Dearest'. Another reason for Dickens' emotion is perhaps explained by the changes which his other friendships had undergone. The death of Macready's wife was the third bereavement which Dickens had suffered in the space of ten weeks. There is a further straining to emphasise Dickens' affection for Macready in the body of the letter and in the body of Macready himself. In the body of this letter of condolence,

Dickens writes, 'my dear dear Macready...my dear friend', variations which are only to be found in these letters of condolence. The affection prompted by the act of writing a letter of condolence on the death of Macready's wife, resulted in a permanent change. All of Dickens' letters to Macready after this time, begin, 'My Dearest Macready'.

After the dropping of 'Mr' and the use of a surname, the next gradation of styling was the replacement of the surname with a Christian name. This usually occurred when writing to a relative. Thus, Tennyson addresses his cousin, Lewis Fytche. 'My dear Lewis', in his letter of condolence on the death of Fytche's father.[39] Although Tennyson began letters of condolence to two of his female friends, Mrs Sophy Elmhirst and Mrs Jane Brookfield, with their Christian names, he never used a Christian name in any letter to any of his male friends. Dickens, in his letters of condolence, does not address any of his female correspondents by a Christian name, and he used a Christian name with only one of his male friends, the author and journalist, Mark Lemon. Again, it is the act of condoling which prompts the change in styling from 'My dear Lemon' to 'My dear Mark'. When Mark Lemon suffered the death of his two year old daughter in January 1851, Dickens sent him a letter of condolence which begins, 'My dear Lemon, / We are deeply sorry to receive the mournful intelligence of your calamity.'[40] When, on 14 April 1851, Dickens was told of the death of his own daughter, Dora Annie, aged eight months, Lemon sat up with Dickens by the bedside of the dead child through the

night. That this formed an intimate link between them, is seen when Lemon's three month old son died. Dickens' letter of condolence, dated 26 April 1855, begins,

> My dear Mark,
> I will call for you at two, and go with you to Highgate [Cemetery], by all means [...] I have no need to tell you, my dear fellow, that my thoughts have been constantly with you, and that I have not forgotten (and never shall forget) who sat up with me one night when a little place in my house was left empty.[4]

The tone of this second letter is more intimate than the first. 'My dear Lemon' of 1851 has become, in the letter of 1855, 'My dear Mark' and 'my dear fellow'; 'We' has become 'I'. Dickens never did forget the mark of love and sympathy which Lemon had shown him when Dora Annie had died: after this letter, all of Dickens' letters to Lemon begin 'My Dear Mark'.

The fact that none of Tennyson's letters of condolence begin 'My dear Sir', or 'My dear Mr...', indicates the nature and degree of his friendship with his bereaved correspondents. The form of address which Tennyson commonly adopted in his letters of condolence was 'My Dear' followed by either a Christian name (when writing to a relative or female friend), or a surname (when writing to a male friend). There are three significant variations in these forms of address. In all of Tennyson's surviving correspondence, Tennyson only uses 'My dear friend' twice: both of these occasions are in letters of condolence. The first of these letters is to the Duchess of Argyll on the death of her father (12 Mar. 1861); the second is in his letter of condolence to

Gladstone. In every other letter written to him, Tennyson writes 'My dear Gladstone'. With the death of Gladstone's eldest son in July 1891, Tennyson calls him 'My dear friend'. Tennyson's letter of condolence to George Eliot (3 December 1878) on the death of George Lewes, begins 'Dear friend', the only time Tennyson ever addressed any of his correspondents in this manner. Although Dickens never used 'My dear friend' at the beginning of his letters, he did at the end. In his letter of condolence to Mrs Watson, which he began with 'My dear, dear Mrs Watson' he ended with 'My Dear friend / Yours with the truest affection and sympathy / CHARLES DICKENS'.[42]

Drawing useful conclusions from the form of address used by Tennyson in other letters of condolence is made difficult by the fact that six of them have no formal start.[43] (6, 7, 10, 16, 17 and 19) In the case of his letter to Princess Alice (c. 23 December 1861), on the death of her father, Prince Albert, the lack of an address might be because the letter exists only in draft form. The lack of a formal start in his offer of his condolences to Robert Barrett Browning on the death of his father (12 Dec. 1889), might be explained by the fact that it is a telegram. It seems that Tennyson did not begin the other four letters with a formal start. The other two letters of condolence which have exceptional beginnings are those written by Tennyson to Queen Victoria. Three of Tennyson's nineteen surviving letters to Queen Victoria have no formal start; fourteen begin 'Madam'. Although there is an uncertainty about the final form of many of

Tennyson's letters, it would seem that the only two changes in styling occur when Tennyson is writing a letter of condolence. Tennyson's first letter to Queen Victoria was a letter of condolence, written in August 1883 on the death of her companion, John Brown. The letter begins 'Dear and Honoured Lady, My Queen'. This was the only occasion on which Tennyson used this particular form of address. His letter of condolence (written c. 20 June 1888), on the death of her son-in-law Frederick, exists only in draft form, and begins 'Madam My most gracious <Sovereign> Queen'. It seems Tennyson began in the usual way with 'Madam', and then thought that more was needed to mark his love and sympathy. His deletion of 'Sovereign' recalls the uncertainty he experienced when he prepared to meet the Queen for the first time in 1862, when he had asked the Duke of Argyll, 'what sort of salutation to make on entering Her private room?'.[44]

As Tennyson's first private visit to Queen Victoria, as her Poet Laureate, took place three months after the death of Prince Albert, it was also a visit of condolence. The correct way to meet and address the Queen combined with, and was complicated by, Tennyson's having to follow the correct form of how to approach, and possibly offer condolences or speak of her loss, to a widow who was also a Monarch. The Duke of Argyll provided Tennyson with the following advice on 25 March 1862:

> In these interviews one sees Her in Her own room without any form or ceremony (unless standing can be said to be so) and what She likes is to be able to speak Her sorrow and Her love to those of whom She thinks that they can feel for or with Her.[45]

That the Duke was aware that standing 'can be said to be' a form or ceremony, concedes the unavoidable fact that expressions of whatever kind must take certain forms. What the Duke also hints at here, is the way that a form could become merely formal and repressive of the natural. The Duke spoke more of this in his next letter to Tennyson, dated 27 March.

> There is no other salutation expected than a respectful bow [...] I must tell you, however, that if you feel a mere *bow* stiff and unnatural, either on first seeing Her, or on Her leaving you, you need not be afraid of kneeling down and kissing Her hand — which after all is the ordinary mode of first Presentation for everyone; and is surely more natural, expressive of reverent affection, now when She is in sorrow. She does not *expect it*, and if, from accidental position, or otherwise, you don't feel it to be easy and natural, I would not do it —— But if you do feel it natural, don't be afraid of doing it — I think She likes all natural signs of devotion and sympathy. In this be guided entirely by your own feelings —— All formality and mere ceremony breaks down in the presence of real sorrow, and what is *natural* is right — with Her [...] Talk to Her as you would to a poor Woman in affliction — that is what she likes best.[46]

There is, however, a marked difference between the actions of condolence ('kneeling down and kissing Her hand') performed when actually 'in the presence of real sorrow', and the written words of condolence offered at a distance. When Edith Simcox met her friend, George Eliot, for the first time after the death of George Lewes, she thought how they would meet in the future, with 'a mere hand clasp, and a sad silent look'.[47] The form of a letter of condolence, however, cannot convey these gestures of love and sympathy. As Newman observed in his essay, 'Literature', from *The Idea of a University*: 'What is spoken cannot outrun the range of

the speaker's voice, and perishes in the uttering.[48] In his letter to his brother and sister-in-law in America, dated September 1819, John Keats had made a similar observation, but in such a way as to attempt to overcome the loss of looks and tones in writing:

> Writing has this disadvan[ta]ge of speaking. one cannot write a wink, or a nod, or a grin, or a purse of the Lips, or a *smile* —— O law! One can-[not] put ones finger to one's nose, or yerk ye in the ribs, or lay hold of your button in writing — but in all the most lively and titterly parts of my Letter you must not fail to imagine me as the epic poets say —— now here, now there, now with one foot pointed at the ceiling, now with another — now with my pen on my ear, now with my elbow in my mouth — O my friends you loose the action — and attitude is every thing...[49]

There are times when it is felt that the 'pen is a feeble interpreter',[50] and that pen-ink-and paper is a poor substitute for the presence of flesh and blood. After the death of Macready's thirty-four year old daughter, Dickens wrote:

> My Dearest Macready.
>
> I write these words to you, as I should silently press your hand if I were by; — not to mourn for the dear girl who is gone; not audaciously to touch those springs of certain consolation which have long raised your thoughts to a serener air, far above the dust of this shadowy world; but as a mark of love and sympathy which, however useless, still relieves my heart of something.
>
> God be with you, and her mother, and all else!
>
> Ever My Dearest Macready
>
> Your most affectionate friend
>
> CHARLES DICKENS[51]

Dickens' love and sympathy for Macready resulted in an instinctive wish to press his hand. As has been seen, Dickens' longing to fold Macready in his arms, resulted in a change of styling from 'My Dear Macready' to 'My Dearest Macready'. If Macready had been

by, Dickens would have pressed his hand 'silently' That he had to write a letter of condolence instead, means that Dickens' first impulse was thwarted. Instead, he was faced with the difficulty of having to put both the action and its effects into words. Dickens strives to make the pressure of his hand felt, but, as can be seen in the length of his first sentence, Macready's hand is forever receding.

It will be remembered that for Arthur Hallam, the letters to and from his fiancee, Emily Tennyson, enacted a kind of death in life: letters 'contain no looks, no tones'.[52] Not being able to press the hand of the bereaved is felt as a bereavement, one which could be felt as a re-enactment of the bereaved's loss (as in Tennyson's *Break, break, break*: 'O for the touch of a vanished hand, / And the sound of a voice that is still!'). Furthermore, if, in writing, you lose the actions of condolence, such as a hand clasp or a look; then the commonplaces of condolences could seem insincere, a mere matter of show. In the Introductory Aphorisms of his *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge declared that in order 'to restore a common-place truth to its first uncommon lustre, you need only translate it into action'.[53]

Tennyson attempts to compensate for the loss of the action of condolence in his letter of condolence to his friend, Lord Houghton (formerly Richard Monckton Milnes), on the death of Houghton's wife.

My dear Houghton

I was the other day present at a funeral here, and one of the chief mourners reached her hand silently almost over the grave, and I as silently gave her mine. No words were possible; and this little note, that can do nothing to help you in your sorrow, is just such a reaching of the hand to you, my old college comrade of more than forty years standing, to show you what I think of you.[64]

Tennyson is aware that 'it is very little that words can do'.[65] His reaching of the hand to Houghton does not attempt the impossible, that is, to convey the result of its reaching. Although the 'reaching of the hand...can do nothing to help you in your sorrow', it is not just an empty gesture; it can 'show you what I think of you'. Moreover, Tennyson compensates for the loss of its completed action, by not making his reaching merely a matter between himself and Houghton. The hand offered to him by the chief mourner of the past funeral is in turn passed on, by way of a little note, to Houghton. The repetition of this gesture serves to remind Houghton that he is not alone in his grief, that there are others unknown to him who are suffering too.

'A reaching of the hand' then, also suggests the way in which the bereaved are drawn together not just by a shared loss, but by shared gestures of condolence. Tennyson recovers the meaning of a convention, in the sense of the commonality and community of the experience of loss and of consolation. The hand of consolation unites with the hand of friendship, as it offers to keep Houghton supported in the position in which Tennyson has always known him, as 'a college comrade of more than forty years *standing*'.

Tennyson compensates for the loss not only of the physical presence of Houghton's wife, but also for the fact that, although he was 'present at a funeral here', he was not present at the funeral of Houghton's wife, and cannot be physically present in his letter. His reaching of the hand also reaches towards his later remark that 'the nobler nature does not pass from its individuality when it passes out of this one life'. The implication of this is that Lady Houghton also reaches 'her hand silently almost over the grave'. His reaching of the hand renews the common sign of friendship — shaking hands — the commonplace 'a helping hand', and also the common emblem carved on the front of funeral monuments (that of two hands, joined together, one commonly, the widow's with a lace cuff).

Robert Browning also offered his hand in his letter of condolence to Lord Houghton, after the death of Houghton's wife (dated, 28 February 1874):

> DEAR HOUGHTON, —— I cannot help saying what all your friends must feel (and I am getting to be a very old friend now) how profoundly grieved I am at your loss, and in a due but very appreciable degree my own. It is a comfort to think you have always been one of the kindest of men, besides something more (or less), and that will console you as it ought. My son is abroad, but he forgets no favours done him, and he had much to remember after his visit to Fryston; I know how sorry he will be. Well, who is to go next? Let us hold hands in the meantime, and
>
> Believe me, dear Houghton,
>
> Ever yours affectionately,
>
> ROBERT BROWNING.
>
> I hope the young people comfort you, and are comforted by you, in this calamity.[66]

As soon as Browning makes a statement in the register of a formal expression of sympathy, he immediately begins to modify or bolster it up with a more informal aside or qualification, as if he is uncertain about which voice he is to speak with, or which hand he is to offer. The tone of the letter is, therefore, shifting and undecided: 'Well, who is to go next?' can convey a variety of tones, from murmured resignation to cheerful insouciance. His 'Let us hold hands in the meantime' can sound tender as well as off-hand. Furthermore, whereas Tennyson's 'a reaching of a hand' is made as a gesture between the condoler and the bereaved, Browning's 'Let us hold hands in the meantime' recalls a gesture more commonly seen between the dying and the comforter. The day before Father Ambrose St John died, Newman recalled, rather like Ophelia when she was 'so affrighted' (II. i. 75) by Hamlet's appearance in her chamber, the following event:

> when he was sitting on the side of his bed, he got hold of me and threw his arm over my shoulder and brought me to him so closely, that I said in joke, 'He will give me a stiff neck'. So he held me for some minutes, I at length releasing myself from not understanding, as *he* did, why he so clung to me. Then he got hold of my hand so tightly as really to frighten me, for he had done so once before when he was not himself I had to get one of the others present to unlock his fingers, ah! little thinking what he meant.[67]

It was Ambrose St John's death which gave this, what was possibly his last, hand clasp a personal and poignant meaning which the previous clasp had not possessed. Newman seems only to have recognised its meaning, after St John's death. For a condoler, actions can provide some support; at least a condoler can do

something at a time when it is felt that words can do very little, or that no words are possible. Although silent gestures are expressive of thought and feeling, it is not always possible to comprehend what thought and feeling they are intended to express. Although actions are sometimes said to speak louder than words, they can be dumb shows: in grief, actions, like words, can feel an inadequate form. Dickens would 'silently press your [Macready's] hand'. Tennyson's 'a reaching of the hand' is so eloquent partly because he has expressed in words the intention and meaning of an action which occurred silently, and which he actually experienced at a time when 'no words were possible'.

The difficulty in deciding Browning's tone in his letter of condolence to Lord Houghton, quoted above, is that the regularity of the appearance of written words mean that letters can suffer the loss of the sound of a speaking voice. Edward FitzGerald, in a letter to W. B. Donne, dated 9 March 1837, felt that:

> Letters look very grave, while all the time there is a smile on the writer's lips: nor will lines of writing represent the modulations of the voice that is speaking half in jest, and half in earnest. Perhaps one might write more intelligibly in waving lines on those recessions.

"Why do you not ask Alfred Tennyson to your house?"

> This would at least characterise the wondering and uncertain mood of mind in which we are often are: in which I am more than half my life, I believe.[50]

The loss of a letter writer's action and the loss of the modulations of a voice, means that in letters, as in death, 'you cannot catch the voice, or feel the hands, or kiss the cheek'.[59] This sense of loss can be seen in Dickens' letter of condolence on the death of John Leech's daughter:

> I do not write as I would, for I really cannot say as I would[60]

and in Henry Hallam's letter to Tennyson, written nine days after the news of Arthur Hallam's death had been announced:

> We cannot express in letters what we would say to each other — therefore, I must request that you meet me in Wimpole Street on Thursday next at one.[61]

And yet, a condoler has to try and express in a letter what he or she cannot say to the bereaved. Although the writer of a letter of condolence uses such terms as 'say' and 'tell', if he cannot make his lines of writing represent the modulations of his voice, then the commonplaces of condolences could appear to be mere ceremony, because they could not be breathed into new life by the particular tone, stress and inflection of an individual's speech and accompanying gestures.

The difficulties which face the writer of a letter of condolence, as a result of the differences between speaking and writing, are addressed by Tennyson in his poem *To J. S.*. That this poem is a verse-letter — addressed to James Spedding, after the death of his brother, Edward (a friend of Tennyson's who died in his youth) —, means that the difficulties of writing a letter

and of writing a poem are drawn together. The eighth stanza of *To. J. S.* draws upon common spoken and written expressions about the character of the deceased.

> I knew your brother: his mute dust
> I honour and his living worth:
> A man more pure and bold and just
> Was never born into the earth.[62]

Traces of the third and fourth lines can be found in letters of condolence in which glimpses of the deceased's virtues and character are provided, such as in Newman's letter of condolence to Wilfred Wilberforce on the death of his father, 'There never was a man more humble than your dear father —'.[63] Tennyson's omission of 'There was', and his avoidance of the momentarily infelicitous 'never was', helps to confirm and emphasise what Edward Spedding was, 'A man'. Tennyson's diction in this quatrain also draws on the rhetorical dignity of funeral orations, such as Mark Antony's 'Caesar was mighty, bold, royal and loving', or 'He was my friend, faithful and just to me' — (the latter also compares with line 61 of *To J. S.*: 'For he too was a friend to me'). Tennyson makes these royal and loving off-stage voices particularly individual, in his phrase, 'born into the earth'. The use of the word 'earth' rather than 'world', emphasises the physical quality of Edward Spedding's character. His 'pure and bold and just' are masculine qualities, particularly when they are compared with Tennyson's observation in his letter of condolence to Sir John Simeon, that the late Lady Simeon was 'sweet and true and gentle'.[64] At the same time, the comparison between 'pure'

and 'earth', helps to make clear the purer, unsullied nature of Spedding, in comparison with many of those on Earth.

Although 'earth' recalls Edward Spedding's 'dust', Tennyson does not allow the verse, and so E. S. (and therefore J. S. also), to come to rest on this word; to end, as it were, in decay. In effect, Tennyson has inverted the now commonplace, 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust', found in *The Order for the Burial of the Dead.* By ending on 'earth', a word which suggests regeneration, Tennyson has also inverted the history of Edward Spedding's life: beginning with his death, he ends with his birth. This brings to mind, 'the second birth of Death' (XLV), especially as E. S. was 'born *into* the earth', rather than '*onto* the Earth'.

> a tear
> Dropt on the letters as I wrote
>
> I wrote I know not what. In truth,
> How *should* I soothe you anyway,
> Who miss the brother of your youth?
> Yet something I did wish to say:
>
> For he too was a friend to me:
> Both are my friends, and my true breast
> Bleedeth for both; yet it may be
> That only silence suiteth best.
>
> Words weaker than your grief would make
> Grief more. 'Twere better I should cease
> Although myself could almost take
> The place of him that sleeps in peace.[65]

The fracturing italic of '*should*' in the line, 'How *should* I soothe you anyway', almost proves how weak words can be in the face of grief; the italics are a typographical representation of how language can break down under the pressures of grief. The

italics are also a way of conveying to the reader that this word is to be read with a particular emphasis. Thus, this word is on the point of breaking down and also of breaking into speech. It attempts to make Tennyson's sympathetic and breathing presence felt in his written words.

Tennyson appears to have conveyed the modulations of his voice, for the colon after 'something I did wish to say', together with the break between stanzas, reads and feels like an intake of breath before speaking: as if the first three and a half lines of the next stanza were this 'something'. What actually follows the colon though, is without speech marks. In fact, it too can be read as a further attempt to begin speaking: the colon after 'me', being another intake of breath which draws the act of speaking nearer and yet further away. What is written — 'For he too was a friend to me: / Both are my friends, and my true breast / Bleedeth for both' —, appears to be the 'something' he had wished to say, but this is never made clear. These lines are made into the reasons why he had this wish, and why he had not been able to carry it out.

Not only does *To J. S.* suggest the modulations of a speaking voice ('*should*'), but the poem also records two expressions of condolence in speech marks.

> I will not even preach to you,
> 'Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.'

and

I will not say, 'God's ordinance
Of Death is blown in every wind'.

As in his letter of condolence to Queen Victoria, beginning, 'I will not say that I am "loyal"', Tennyson has managed to distance himself from the words of others by prefacing these religious consolations with a denial, and by using speech marks. At the same time, however, these words are his, for not only has he included them in his poem (as he has in his letter of condolence), but he has also distanced himself from them and transformed them in order to make them his own. If 'God's ordinance of Death is blown in every wind' was offered as a spoken condolence, it would be in danger of sounding too grandly oratorical. It would seem therefore, that Tennyson has not merely written down what other friends have said, but has poeticised their proverbial expression of Christian comfort, of how Death is part of God's great plan, a plan which is seen and felt everywhere and in every thing. Thus, although Tennyson draws upon a commonplace of religious consolation, which could sound impersonal, he has managed not to make it sound too commonplace.

In his copy of *A Key to Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'* (1882), by Alfred Gatty, Tennyson underlined the phrase 'sacramental wine' from section XXXVII, and wrote alongside it: 'sounds too commonplace' (by 1855, he had altered it to 'sacred wine').[66] This is an off-stage voice which sounds throughout *In Memoriam*, for the imagery, language and form of its subject matter was made up of, and crowded round with forms and conventions. Not only the

elaborate and mass produced conventions of funerals and mourning, such as the 'black plumes, black coaches and nonsense' at the funeral of Tennyson's mother,[67] and the commonplaces of grief and of condolences, but also the poetic expressions and conventions of past elegies. Tennyson's awareness of what 'sounds too commonplace' is a recognition that although he does not just want to say what anyone else can say, or has already said, and wishes to avoid sounding merely 'flat and stale', yet he cannot frame a language for himself. In order for the poem not to be merely esoteric, he cannot ignore grief's community of experience and expression.

Tennyson's anxiety about not offering 'old hackneyed terms' in his letters of condolence, provides a context for section VI, which, as John Rosenberg has observed, 'confesses its own triteness':[68]

> One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
> That 'Loss is common to the race' —
> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.
>
> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more:
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening but some heart did break.[69]

'Common is the commonplace' is striking even though it is stating an obvious truth, that is, that what is commonplace is no longer striking. In referring back upon itself, the phrase suggests how the words of commonplaces have become devoid of their original force. Tennyson's 'Too common!' attempts to regain a

sense of originality which even the word 'commonplace' has lost, by dint of its common application. 'Too common!' serves to emphasise the distance between the common nature of commonplaces and the distinctly personal nature of Tennyson's loss. The general terms, 'the race', 'loss is common', reveal Tennyson's bitter sense that the effect of such commonplaces is the loss of what is personal and particular about 'my own [loss]'. He is not wanting 'Other friends', but rather he is forever seeking 'My friend, the brother of my love' (IX), 'my old friend' (LXIV), 'my friend' (XII, XLI, LXXXIV [twice], C, and CXXVI). The 'one' who writes — itself an impersonal way of referring to this particular writer —, writes impersonally, because he does not acknowledge that the one whom Tennyson seeks was not common to the race. Hallam was thought of as the most charming and the most promising'[70] of his contemporaries: Tennyson calls him 'The man I held as half-divine' (XIV).

S. Shatto and M. Shaw, in their edition of *In Memoriam*,[71] relate 'Other friends remain' to Robert Monteith's letter to Tennyson in December 1833:

> all wish, as I do, for still stricter friendship with you, it might be, (which is all but impossible) that together we might help you to fill up the gap').[72]

Monteith's commonplace, 'to fill up the gap', is felt to be vacant, because it does not recognise fully that the vacant place created by Hallam's death cannot be filled by other friends. Gladstone remarked that 'When much time has elapsed, when most

bereavements will be forgotten, he [Hallam] will still be remembered, and his place, I fear, will be felt to be still vacant...'.[73] This feeling, which is shared by other friends, has a particular application in Tennyson's case: he feels that there is 'unto me no second friend' (VI). The loss and the sense of loss is also common, in so far as Tennyson feels that it was experienced by both himself and by Hallam ('our fatal loss [XLI], 'our common grief' [LXXXV]). Tennyson's own 'void where heart on heart reposed' can only be alleviated by his finding those traces of his friendship with Hallam and of Hallam's human character which might remain in the memory, and which might also remain in his second state sublime. He is not concerned with other friends who remain, but with what remains of his friend, Arthur Hallam.

It was the writing of *In Memoriam* which helped Tennyson to fill the void of his loss. As he remarked, 'the general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space I would put in a poem'.[74] This 'blank space', then, is not only a perceived lacuna in the poem's dramatisation of the different moods of sorrow, it is also representative of the feeling of emptiness which is felt commonly after death, and which Tennyson peculiarly experienced after Hallam's death. Thus, the blank space of loss was filled with a poem which attempts to put in place of the blank space of loss, a record both of the phases of Tennyson's friendship with Hallam, and of the particular qualities of Hallam, as well as the varying traces of those varying moods which a long-enduring sorrow assumes.

The general nature of 'the race' shifts to the particularity of Tennyson's personal loss ('My own'). 'Some heart did break', however, which draws upon the commonplace 'broken-heart' or 'broken-hearted', results in a return to what is common to all ('some heart'), both in the present and the past ('did break'). Moreover, 'my own less bitter', which draws upon the commonplace 'bitter loss', acknowledges that the loss was bitter without stating it explicitly. The phrase, however, does more than just imply this. 'My own [loss]' is not explicitly associated with 'bitter', but is placed between different extremes of bitter loss ('less bitter, rather more'), so that although 'less bitter' has a passingly felicitous aspect, 'rather more', serves to emphasise the disparity between the common sense of loss (made less bitter through its common application) and Tennyson's particular loss. This movement from what is common to what is personal, is a local example of what occurs both locally and also throughout the whole of *In Memoriam*. As Tennyson told his friend, James Knowles,

> It is rather the cry of the whole human race than mine. In the poem altogether private grief swells out into thought of, and hope for, the whole human race [...] It is a very personal and impersonal poem.[75]

One of the central problems for Tennyson in writing *In Memoriam*, was that he had to make loss, which is common to the whole human race, both particular to himself and, at the same time, particular to others. Tennyson sought to ensure that the poem was not just personal to him. He published the poem anonymously, left the full identity of its subject only partially revealed by the title, *In*

Memoriam, A. H. H., and made revisions, such as the reduction of 'his hand' to 'a hand' in line 4 of section VII, which lessened some of Tennyson's explicit personal links with the subject of the poem. At the same time, however, the poem remains deeply personal. Its subject is spoken to directly as 'my friend' who is and was ('I loved thee Spirit, and love' LXI); he is referred to and called to by his Christian name ('Arthur' LXXX) and by a Christian name preceded by a personal pronoun 'my Arthur' (IX [twice] and LXXXIX]). A loss which is common — 'a life removed', 'a loss for ever new', 'A void where heart on heart reposed' (XIII), 'a vanished life' (X) — and also particular and personal — 'my deep regret', 'my forsaken heart' (VIII), 'my deepest grief...my deeper anguish' (XIX),'my grief', (LXXXV) private sorrow' (XXI), 'my troubled spirit' (XXVIII).

Tennyson manages to make section VI both 'very personal and impersonal', by his drawing upon the impersonal language of the commonplace and then making it his own, through the force of poetry. Thus, '"Loss is common to the race"' draws on Gertrude's telling Hamlet, 'Thou knowst 'tis common all that lives must die' (I. ii. 72). Harold Jenkins comments that this 'is a traditional commonplace of consolation', and he compares the line to similar sentiments in Ovid and Seneca.[76] Hearing the allusion to *Hamlet* — ''tis common all' —, creates the expectation that '"Loss is common"' will be followed by 'to all'. In his letter of condolence to George Eliot (after the death of George Lewes), Mark Pattison wrote of 'the common loss of all of us'.[77] The

commonplace sentiment and language of '"Loss is common"' in section VI, is recovered and made striking by the surprise use of a fairly uncommon expression, '"to the race"' (one of the six examples for the definition of 'race' used in this sense, cited by the OED, is line 2 from section VI of *In Memoriam*). Whereas in Tennyson's *Tithonus*, 'the race' is given a more precise definition — 'the kindly race of men' — 'the race' of section VI of *In Memoriam* has the capacity to remain both general and particular. That it is only 'the race' — 'one of the great divisions of living creatures' —, means that the idea of loss is not just confined to contemporaries, as in Pattison's 'all of us', but swells out to include all of mankind.

At the same time, however, '"the race"' is not just confined to mankind, but to other kinds of living creatures. Although Gertrude's 'all that lives' implies more than just mankind, '"the race"' has a scientific aspect ('a genus, species, kind of animals' [OED, 3c], 'a genus, species, or variety of plants' [OED, 4]), which looks towards those considerations of natural history and evolution in section LVI ('"So careful of the type?"'). In addition, '"the race"' also evokes the idea of the journey, or pilgrimage, of life ('we too, should throw off everything that hinders us [...] and keep running steadily in the race we have started' Hebrews 12: 1). That Tennyson states that 'My lost Arthur whom I shall not see / Till all my widowed race be run' (XI), and that, 'He still outstript me in the race' (XLIII), goes on to suggest that death shall not be an end of existence: the race —

both mankind and the course of life of mankind — 'here upon the ground', continues 'Beyond the second birth of Death' (XLV). In section LXXXV, Tennyson states: 'I felt and feel... / The footsteps working in my own' (LXXXV).

The speech marks around '"Loss is common to the race"', emphasises the fact that these are the words written by a friend. These speech marks, together with Tennyson's reply to the words contained within them, 'Too common', seems to distance him from these words. And yet, Tennyson's inclusion of these words in his poem, and both his explict reference and implied allusion to the vast perspective of the already written, also means that he recognises that he cannot frame a language for himself. At the same time, however, Tennyson makes these words peculiarly his own. As a result of the rich suggestiveness of 'the race', it seems likely that 'Loss is common to the race', was not what the friend had actually written, but had been reshaped by Tennyson, in order to fit the form of the poem and to create uncommon ambiguities. His allusion to *Hamlet* serves not only to evoke a vast perspective (stretching back at least to Ovid and Seneca), it also brings to mind Hamlet's obstinate and impatient reply to the commonplace offered by Gertrude — 'Ay, madam, 'tis common' (I. ii. 74) —; an allusion which Tennyson goes on to make more explicit in his 'Too common!'. Thus, even whilst Tennyson is expressing a commonplace without merely being commonplace, and remaking what is commonplace with his addition of '"to the race"', he is also suggesting a

sense of impatience with the commonplace nature of such sentiments within and beyond the very expression of the sentiment.

And yet, even though section VI begins with Tennyson expressing his impatience at the vacancy of the commonplace about the common nature of loss, he goes on, in the following eight stanzas of the section to derive some comfort from this very idea. These stanzas depict scenes in which a father, a mother and a 'poor child, that waitest for thy love', are all expecting and preparing for the return of their loved ones, unaware that they have already died. As Ricks comments, the death of the mother's son resounds with Clarence's dream of drowning in *Richard III*,[78] whilst Tennyson's own situation of expecting Hallam's return, together with that of the 'poor child', have an echo in Juvenal (*Satire iii*), 'such expressions were common in classical poetry (as Horace observes in *Odes*, IV ii 21-2)'.[79] Herbert F. Tucker finds that it is Tennyson's inclusion of himself in these 'patently sentimental vignettes [...which] redeems the heavily sentimental irony'.[80] Again, Tennyson combines the very personal and the impersonal, which in the final stanza of the section, achieves a startling juxtaposition of the general and the particular:

> O what to her shall be the end?
> And what to me remains of good?
> To her, perpetual maidenhood,
> And unto me no second friend.[81]

Tennyson's comparison of his situation with a specific example of 'some heart' about to break, establishes a closeness and a

distance between 'her' and 'me'. In the first two lines, the punctuation which closes each line, keeps 'her' and 'me' separate. Although in the last two lines, Tennyson continues to consider 'her' and 'me' in alternate lines, 'her and me' are also combined in a single sentence, and, moreover, both are linked by the rhyming of the second and third line ('good / maidenhood'). Her 'perpetual maidenhood', then, has a literal, as well as an associative proximity to what remains for Tennyson: it is different from and yet similar to his blank feeling that there is 'unto me no second friend', and this comparison is one which later swells out into Tennyson's comparison of his grief about the death of Hallam to that of a 'widower' (XIII), and to his 'spectral doubt .../ That I shall be thy mate no more' (XLI).

It is now something of a commonplace of literary criticism to attribute part of the success of *In Memoriam* to its successful renewal of commonplaces, and to quote the first two lines of section VI as quoted above.. Herbert F. Tucker, seems to have begun this trend in his *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism*, in which he makes the observation that

> The poem trades in clichés, at great and local levels. But it does so most actively when it sets up an exchange between the worn tokens of stock response and freshly minted reactions to its precipitating occasions; and the changes it rings by striking the one against the other are the secret both of its initial success and of its continuing currency.[92]

His chief example of this is section XI, which employs 'such cliches as "silver sleep" and "that noble breast"', and ends in

the 'literalizing resuscitation of two dead metaphors from the common tongue, "dead calm" and "heaving deep"'.[83] Rosenberg notices this too, putting it in the context of 'the unstated commonplace..."Drowning in sorrow"...that underlies *In Memoriam* from its opening through [to] Section XIX'.[84] Eric Griffiths explains how 'the clock / Beats out the little lives of men' of section II is itself a menacing reformulation of a seemingly 'placid commonplace', and also sets into startling relief the 'idyllic platitudes' which precede it.[85]

It is significant that out of the nine natural groups or divisions in the poem, these examples of renewed commonplaces are all from the first two groups. Although the poem as a whole 'is *not* an actual biography',[86] or, indeed, a diary, it is in so far as the first group, I - VII, speaks of the 'First realization of sorrow' (III),[87] and some of its different moods; whilst the second group, IX - XX, speaks of the passage, arrival and burial of the body. Sections IX, XVII, XVIII are also some of the first written. As has been seen, the first sharp moments of a bereavement, and the funeral practices of the Victorians are in an area of life which was felt to have become unmeaning, having attained an air of formality and conventionalism .

References to physical remains in *In Memoriam* are, with one exception, all to be found in the first two groups of the poem. The first mention of remains is in line 4 of the first stanza of section II: 'The roots [of the Old Yew] are wrapt around

the bones'. 'The underlying dead' in the second line, implies that 'the bones' belong to them, although the general and impersonal nature of these expressions creates an indistinctness. Tennyson might be thinking of all the dead buried in a churchyard which is both somewhere and everywhere, or the bones of only one of the dead buried there. 'The bones' can thus suggest that the physical remains of one of the underlying dead has become indistinguishable from those of another. This loss of individuality which Hallam's body will suffer in time, grows out of and into a fear that 'the victor Hours' might also reduce the intensity, individuality and persistence both of what remains of Hallam — in the sense of his individual characteristics as they remain in the memory and as they might beyond death — and also of Tennyson's individual grief for his loss. 'The quiet bones' in section XIII, which according to Shatto and Shaw are a classical commonplace, retain a sense of individuality by the recording of the fact of their having being placed 'Among familiar names', and 'in the places of his youth'. In section IX 'his holy urn' and 'My lost Arthur's loved remains' identify explicitly their personal identity. Tennyson not only personalises Hallam's remains, but in section XVII, he also conveys his sense of personal reverence for them: that it is 'his holy urn...sacred dust...'precious relics', helps to confirm the assertion that this was 'The man I held as half-divine' (XIV). These recurring concerns about and references to the physical nature of Hallam's dead body take place alongside thoughts about Hallam's physical presence when alive. Thus, Hallam's alive 'hands' (or 'hand')

'grow incorporate' not only into his dead hands (both real and imagined: VII [twice], X, XIII and XIV), but also into the real and also impersonal hands of others (I, III, X, and XVIII), as well as those of personifications (Nature's 'empty hands' [III]).

The only references to the commonplaces of grief, mourning and funerals in *In Memoriam* are 'Old Yew...the stones' (II ['Dark yew XXXIX, 'mouldering yew' LXXVI]); [widow's] 'weeds' (V); 'his tomb' (VIII); 'the ritual of the dead (XVIII); 'the grave' (XXI); 'borne with bier and pall' (LVIII); 'thy place of rest...thy marble...thy tablet' (LXVII); 'sepulchral halls....in vaults and catacombs...cold crypts' (LXXXV). Again, Tennyson manages to avoid the evocation of the 'black, plumes, black coaches and nonsense' which were the conventions and commonplaces of both real and also of poetic funerals, such as Thomas Parnell's *A Night-Piece on Death*:

> Why then the flowing sable Stoles,
> Deep pendent Cypress, mourning Poles,
> Long Palls, drawn Herses, cover'd Steeds,
> And Plumes of black, that as they tread,
> Nod o'er the 'Scutcheons of the Dead?[88]

and Robert Blair's *The Grave*:

> But see! the well-plum'd hearse comes nodding on
> Stately and slow, and properly attended
> By the whole sable tribe[89]

Yew trees are also a commonplace of these so-called 'Graveyard poets'; as well as a traditional symbol of mourning and death, they are also commonplace in real country churchyards. Tennyson's

'Old Yew' does not remain so. The conventional yew of the poetic churchyard (such as Parnell's 'black and funr'al yew'), is made real by Tennyson having based his description on a real yew tree which he has observed closely and with scientific accuracy (the 'Dark Yew' of section XXIX, with its 'living smoke'). Having made the tree and the convention alive in this way, he transforms and makes it something rich and strange. In section II, the yew is more than personified and addressed. It becomes a tree which 'has mortal longings and a seeming will of its own'.[90] The 'weeds' in section V, are not explicity defined as belonging to a widow or to widows, and are made strange by their comparison with words ('in words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er' / Like coarsest clothes against the cold'[V]).

Not only is Tennyson faced with commonplaces when putting his grief into words which are common and yet not too commonplace, but, in writing even *Fragments of an Elegy* (one of his original titles for *In Memoriam*), he is faced with the past elegies. There is a strong undertow of past elegies, such as Shelley's *Adonais* and, in particular, as B. McMullen and J. R. Kinkaid observe, Milton's *Lycidas*.[91] Rosenberg notes that,

> *the* English elegy about a deceased Cambridge schoolfellow poet [Milton's *Lycidas*] is already there, written, as Tennyson, takes up his pen.[92]

The stock phrases and figures of the elegy, the 'air of formality and conventionalism' of expressions of grief and of condolence could, as has been seen, feel as though they had lost their

meaning and the sense of the personal. Shatto and Shaw find that of the different scenes of loss which are presented in the first two groups of the poem, many are the stock situations of classical poetry. As Sacks points out, however, although 'elements of the elegiac conventions are certainly evident...and Tennyson did rearrange his sections so that they might broadly conform to the general structure of an elegy...any strict generic coherence', which the poem might have as a result, is fractured by its 'extreme length...[and] highly personalized moments'.[93]

It is Tennyson's drawing upon grief's community of experience and expression, together with his awareness of the possibility of sounding too commonplace, which in his poetry and in his letters of condolence singles out his voice from the many. Not wanting to sound too commonplace, and being a reticient man, Tennyson's natural inclination is to hesitate.

V

HESITATING TO APPROACH

DUBITATIO (a rhetorical figure) when we hesitate in perplexity over which to choose of two or more alternatives,

L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*[1]

On 19 May 1867, Dickens wrote a letter of condolence to George Stanfield, after the death of Dickens' friend and illustrator, Clarkson Stanfield:

> My Dear George
> When I came up to the house this afternoon and saw what had happened, I had not the courage to ring, though I had thought I was fully prepared by what I heard when I called yesterday.[2]

Dickens could probably have seen what had happened because it was a custom for the house of the deceased and/or the bereaved, to be 'shut up and hushed' (closed shutters, or drawn blinds).[3] A dark house marked the fact that the bereaved had withdrawn from the world, and prospective visitors would need a good deal of courage to get past such easily interpreted outward and forbidding signs of grief. As with the letter writer who did not know when to address a letter to the bereaved, so the potential visitor would not know when was a good time to call, or whether to call at all. James Spedding, in a postcript in his letter thanking Henry Hallam for his copy of *Remains in Verse and Prose of Henry Hallam*, wrote:

> I should have called on you in London, if I had not known from recent experience that visits are often anything but consolatory.[4]

Dickens decided that the afternoon of the death of Clarkson Stanfield, was too soon to visit Clarkson's son. His nerve failed him partly because Stanfield's death was felt as 'a great loss' by him. Thus, those contemplating a visit of condolence would often have to face, or avoid, their own grief, as well as the distress experienced by the receiver of the visit. As a Victorian courtesy book, *The Habits of Good Society*, points out:

> Visits of condolence are terrible inflictions to both the receiver and giver, but they may be made less so by avoiding, as much as consistent with sympathy, any allusion to the past. The receiver does well to abstain from tears.[5]

The giver's avoidance of the past and the receiver's abstention from tears is a denial of the very reason for the visit. That the writer of a letter of condolence was not in the actual physical presence of the bereaved could be seen as an advantage. A visit could be a terrible infliction because it would take place in the very place where past scenes of recent friendship with the deceased had occurred. On the afternoon of 7 May 1837, Dickens' seventeen year old sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, died in his arms. The next day Dickens wrote to his friend, W. Harrison Ainsworth:

> She had accompanied us to the [St. James'] Theatre the night before apparently in the best of health ; was taken ill in the night, and lies here a corpse. She has been our constant companion since our marriage; the grace and life of our home.[6]

Seven months later, on 12 December 1837, Dickens arranged for a box at the same theatre. He instructed J. P. Harley to ask a Mrs Braham

> to leave word with the man at the door to let us have either

> a pit or a proscenium box *on the same side as that in which we used to sit; but not a box on the same tier or opposite.* Old recollections make us shun our old haunts, or the sight of them.'

That one of Dickens' old haunts has itself become haunted by his memory of Mary Hogarth, means that 'pit' and 'box' are strangely ambiguous. As well as referring to that part of the auditorium on the floor of the theatre, 'a pit' is also a hole dug in the ground for a dead body; 'a box' is both a separate compartment in a theatre and a lidded receptacle, such as a coffin. Dickens wants his box to be on the same side, but not at the same level, as before. He wishes to sit near to the box, but not so near that he can see it: the box 'where we used to sit' now contains old recollections. The double sense of what the 'box' contains, is conveyed by his wanting to 'shun ['to avoid from repugnance, fear, or caution (OED, 3)] our old haunts'.

Edith Simcox's visit of condolence to the bereaved George Eliot, was also affected by this mingling of the past with the present:

> how hard it was to go to the house after that evening of death — and yet it was a common duty to go and ask how she was. At last I went — without wish, as a duty. I took a cab, I couldn't bear to traverse the so well known track. The maid said she was better than she had been yet, 'seemed more cheerful' — God help her! If anything could be harder it was to enter the house, to wait in the dining room — Charles was out and had left word for me to wait: I had never been in the dining room except with him [the dead George Lewes] and usually it was for some kind purpose that he called me there. There he showed me all her manuscripts. There he gave me "The Spanish Gypsy," there he had come to answer my questions about her [...] I waited half an hour, standing on the rug looking at her portrait and finding more sweetness in it than before. Lying on the chimney piece under my eyes was an open bill — 1 widow's cap — 7/6 — and something else — that is how I see her — with a set, worn, white face — My poor darling —it is too hard — I think of meeting her — it seems years hence, with a mere hand clasp and a sad silent

look.[8]

Simcox avoids referring to George Lewes by name. The panicky nature of her condition can be felt in her ranging round the room: her memories of George Lewes are brought to mind, and although she can see where he had been, Simcox encounters an empty space wherever she looks. And in her attempt to locate where Lewes had been ('there. There...There...there'), Simcox brings to mind where Lewes is now. There is a strange confusion of elements and place in 'lying on the chimney piece under my eyes'. Although this turns out to be 'an open bill' for a widow's cap, 'lying', 'under my eyes', 'open', and 'something else', all evoke Lewes' open grave and what is lying in it. Her looking at Eliot's portrait differently from before, coincides with what Simcox had already heard, that Eliot wanted to be thought of 'as a dead friend'.[9] When Eliot meets Simcox, 'that is how I see her': Eliot, 'with a set, worn, white face', has a cadaverous appearance.

Simcox seems to have attempted to call on Eliot between January and March 1879, but for various reasons — Eliot was always much exhausted after seeing anyone —, Simcox failed to see her. On 27 February, Simcox had seen Eliot only fleetingly. On 19 March, Simcox wrote: 'My dread of seeing Her grows more and more intense yet'.[10] Her next successful visit was on 12 April 1879:

> I came in with my veil down — she received me almost as usual and but for the veil which she made me take off would have received me with a kiss of welcome. — I spoke with effort of the long cold, and the danger of inclement holiday times. She said the coffee palaces seemed the only resource — had I seen much of them? I spoke of my lecturing for the

> working men's clubs. She had in her hands some of his Ms and proof and said she would leave me for a moment to put it in a place of safety. I tried to force back the tears, and stooped as she came back to move the footstool out of her way. She called me a thoughtful child and presently as another easy subject I spoke of Mrs. Stuart.||

This visit points up the difficulty of the advice offered by *The Habits of Good Society*, that a visit might be made less terrible by avoiding any allusion to the past. Her holding of 'some of his Ms and proof' is a physical reminder of the presence of the absence of the very subject upon which they will not, or cannot, speak. Eliot's hasty departure from the room, is expressive of the need to avoid the pain that is felt underneath their exchanges. She finds 'a place of safety' not just for these papers, but for herself. Simcox knew that Eliot had had 'hysterical fits'.[12] Eliot's leaving the room allows both her and her visitor to try and 'force back the tears', and so regain their composure. Eliot's calling Simcox 'a thoughtful child' is an eloquent gesture because it appreciates the consideration shown by Simcox's action. Moving the footstool out of Eliot's way, allowed Simcox to force back the tears (if she had kept her veil on, it would have perhaps been easier to have concealed them). She is thoughtful because her tears show that she has sympathy for Eliot's loss and her attempt to conceal her tears shows that she does not wish to distress Eliot further. By recognising the obstacle, they are both able to find their way to an easier subject.

Although a visitor might receive immediate proof of the success or failure of his or her condolences, by contrast, the writer of a

letter of condolence would not know if his letter had caused distress or comfort. Nearly two months after the death of his wife, Carlyle wrote to his sister, Jean:

> I am sad and sombre, my heart wholly *wae, wae*; and occupied with one object, which none can be expected to share with me, —— nor could in the least *help* me if they did. But I keep very quiet; fully *best*, I think, when nobody is speaking to me, and I walk silent with my thoughts and memories for company.[13]

Writing a letter of condolence in the first sharp moments of a bereavement, then, could show a want of respect for the private and silent nature of the bereaved's grief. As Lindemann has observed, pangs of grief 'can be precipitated by visits, by mention of the deceased, and by receiving sympathy'.[14] Eight days after the death of William Thackeray, on 24 December 1863, his friend, Edward FitzGerald, wrote a letter of condolence to Thackeray's eldest daughter, Anne, which begins:

> I hope it won't distress or annoy you if I write a very few lines to say that I don't forget you or him; never have forgot, though my Way of Life has kept me apart'.[15]

The fact that a condoler was a single voice among many, meant that it might not only be a single letter which was a terrible infliction, but also the total number of letters received. By 4 June 1875, eleven days after the death of his friend, Father Ambrose St. John, Newman had received over a hundred letters of condolence. Newman was under a great affliction: he was bereaved of a close friend, and overpowered with letters. As he told Emily Bowles, in a letter dated, 3 June 1875, 'I cannot bear not to answer them'.[16] That he felt it was his duty to do so, was an

additional burden to the grief he already felt. Newman asked Lord Blachford if his earlier letter to him (dated 31 May) could be sent to his sister and then on to Bloxam, because 'it is a saving if one can be made to do for several'.[17] This was particularly so for those friends who wanted to know the details of Father Ambrose's illness and death. Newman wrote 'a Memorandum so full' in the hope that it 'would spare me the distress of going through all I had set down again'.[18] A further problem for Newman was created by the fact that he could not help replying to some friends before others. Such an act was likely to cause controversy. Newman's letter to Emily Bowles (3 June) begins:

> Don't be surprised that I have written to some others before you — this is because I love you so much and trust you so well, that I have wanted to send you a longer letter than I could now.[19]

It appears that Bowles may actually have been more than surprised, for in a letter to her on 22 June, Newman wrote: 'You must not be angry with me. I have thought of you a great deal all the time.'[20] That he did not reply to one correspondent (now not possible to identify) until over a month after Father Ambrose's death, seems to have been the cause of some annoyance to that correspondent. Newman explained why 'circumstances have lately hindered me from answering letters', and hoped she would 'take this as my excuse, and be sure that my silence does not arise from any want of respect to you'.[21] After the death of George Lewes, George Eliot was also concerned that her not acknowledging her letters of condolence might lead her correspondents 'to misinterpret my silence'.[22]

Thus, a would-be writer of a letter of condolence was faced with the perplexity of two alternatives, which are made explicit by W. J. Rose, in his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam (written on 3 October 1833, two days after the death of Arthur Hallam had been announced):

> I am well aware that my writing to you (which can have no immediately good effect) may for the moment irritate; but I had rather that you were now vext at my intrusion, than pained by the after thought of an old and professedly attached friend having shown no sympathy in your distress.[23]

Although waiting before sending a letter of condolence could be a sign of respect for the private nature of grief, such a silence could be misinterpreted as arising from a want of respect. On the other hand, instead of being a tender proof of feeling, a letter of condolence received in the first sharp moments of a bereavement, might only be a cause of vexation of distress. Thus, a condoler was in danger of being judged in one of two bad ways, as neglectful, or intrusive, with the result that, as J. B. Boasanquet confessed in his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam, dated 21 October 1833:

> I do not know when to address a letter to you.[24]

It was therefore commonplace for a condoler to wait two or three days before writing, and to also begin a letter of condolence with a sense of hesitation, for fear of intruding. This is W. J. Rose's letter of condolence to Henry Hallam, dated 6 November 1833:

> My dear Hallam
> I am persuaded from the tone of Lord Lansdowne's & Wishaw's [mutual friends] letters to me upon the painful subject of your

loss, that they have been restrained from writing to you from the apprehension of intruding upon your sorrows.[25]

Wanting to write a letter of condolence, but thinking it best to wait, sometimes led to a sense of agitation which condolers found difficult to contain. On 15 October 1833, fifteen days after the death of Arthur Hallam had been announced, Maria Callcott began her letter of condolence to Henry Hallam thus:

My dear dear Mr Hallam
It has been with great difficulty that I have refrained from writing to you before.[26]

On 11 November 1833, Francis Doyle told Hallam that 'I find it impossible to refrain any longer from expressing to you how deeply I have sympathized with the sorrows of your family.'[27] Dickens waited twelve days before writing a letter of condolence to the Honourable Mrs Richard Watson, after the death of her husband: 'My dear, dear Mrs Watson / I cannot bear to be silent longer.'[28]

If old and professedly attached friends of the bereaved felt that writing was an intrusion, then for a condoler who did not have such an intimacy, a letter of condolence could be felt to be even more so. Francis Doyle began his letter to Henry Hallam (11 November 1833):

My Dear Sir
I have not written to you before because I was afraid of appearing intrusive and officious.[29]

Dickens begins his letter of condolence to the Reverend H. R. Hughes, on the death of his brother (the Reverend S. R. Hughes,

whom, it seems, Dickens had only met once):

> My Dear Sir
> [...] I must not obtrude my condolences on the fresh grief of the family.[30]

If a condoler had a more intimate friendship with the deceased than the bereaved (as Doyle had had with Arthur Hallam), then restraint was necessary in order to avoid laying claim to a greater grief than that of the recipient of their letters. In his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam (3 Mar 1834), thanking him for sending a copy of *Remains in Verse and Prose of Arthur Henry Hallam*, James Spedding wrote: 'I say nothing to you of my personal grief; lively as I feel it, it must seem weak to yours.[31]'

Richard Monckton Milnes also felt the need to justify his claim to write, in his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam (4 Nov):

> My dear Sir
> I hardly know whether I am not following a blind feeling against my better judgement. I cannot clearly represent to myself by what right I intrude upon the solitude of your sorrow, but yet I find it impossible to let many days go by, after my arrival in England, without some expression of my own personal grief and close sympathy with yours, at the fearful shock which your most sacred love and my friendship has sustained.[32]

Such tentativeness is a mark of love and sympathy because it marks respect for the personal and private nature of grief. It will be remembered that the Reverend Mark Pattison began his letter of condolence to George Eliot (18 January 1879):

> My dear Mrs Lewes
> I have forborne to intrude upon your sorrow with a letter, hitherto, because under such circumstances, anything that one can write has an air of conventionalism and formality, even when the sympathy is most sincere.[33]

Even the fear of intruding had an air of conventionalism. Coleridge, in his *Aids to Reflection*, delivers the following aphorism:

> There is one sure way of giving freshness and importance to the most common-place maxims — that of reflecting on them in direct reference to our own state and conduct, to our own past and future being.[34]

What makes Tennyson's hesitancy about intruding upon the private nature of the bereaved's grief especially acute and personal, is that it is informed by his feelings about his present and future privacy. Although in the public eye, Tennyson was 'a shy beast...[who] like[d] to keep to my burrow'.[35] Disliking 'the blare and blaze of so-called fame',[36] his natural state was brooding over a pipe in a study or attic. Tennyson wished that, like Shakespeare, the world knew nothing of him but his writings, and maintained that the desire for the acquaintance with the lives of great men was treating them like pigs to be ripped open for the public. That 'all the magazines and daily newspapers...pounce upon everything they can get hold of', meant that a private life was anatomised even while the author of it was still alive.[37] Although Tennyson managed to maintain much of his privacy while he was alive, he feared what would happen to his private self after his death. On 5 October 1892, the day before Tennyson died, he 'was pleased by the telegram sent to him by the Queen, but he muttered, "O that Press will get hold of me now!"'.[38] He feared that his privacy, which he felt should have gone to the grave with him, would now be subject to the action of the body-snatcher.

(During his last illness, Tennyson wondered what reporters wanted 'digging up the graves of my father and mother, grandfather and grandmother').[39] Edward FitzGerald told his friend, William Thackeray, in 1851, that it was 'the vile fashion of the day', for the letters of famous men to 'fall into unwise hands, and...get published'.[40] The fourth and fifth stanzas of Tennyson's poem, *To —, After Reading a Life and Letters* (1849), immortalise his distaste for the publication of a private life:

> now the Poet cannot die,
> Nor leave the music as of old,
> But round him ere he scarce grow cold
> Begins the scandal and the cry:
>
> 'Proclaim the faults he would not show:
> Break lock and seal: betray the trust:
> Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just
> The many-headed beast should know.'[41]

'Lock and seal', as opposed to the commonplace 'lock and key', makes fast Tennyson's need to keep sacred all private utterances, be they conversations or letters. Such a combination is already implicit in one of the meanings of 'seal': 'a piece of wax...fixed on a folded letter or document or on a closed door or receptacle of any kind' (OED, 2). Tennyson sought to keep the lock and seal on his private conversation, by setting a 'seal', in the figurative sense of 'a token or a symbol of a covenant' (OED, 1b) on his friends, such as the contract which was secured with F. T. Palgrave on the very first day that he made a visit:

> He gave me (first also of how many gifts!) the lines "You might have won...," [*To —, After Reading a Life and Letters*] just printed in a newspaper. Hence, impressed from the very beginning by the heart-felt praise which Tennyson here gave to "unrecording friends," I held myself absolutely barred by the fealty of friendship, from the attempt to make any memorial of his words.[42]

Palgrave was 'impressed': he bore Tennyson's seal, in the sense of 'a mark of ownership' (OED, 1h). The device of giving Palgrave this particular poem meant that Palgrave was 'barred', in the sense of prevented and in the sense of 'striped, streaked' (OED, 3) like a wax seal, by 'the fealty of friendship'. He could only record Tennyson's wish to be unrecorded. By making public his wish to remain private, Tennyson ensured that Palgrave's lips were sealed: thus, the 'golden streams [of his long dialogues with Palgrave and others]...flowed by to waste and Lethe.'[43]

It is not easy for a poet to seal the fate of his private written words, particularly those of letters, which are literally out of his hands. In a letter to Gladstone (December 1883), Tennyson wrote:

> P.S. I heard of an old lady the other day to whom all the great men of her time had written. When Froude's *Carlyle* came out, she rushed up to her room, and to an old chest there wherein she kept their letters, and flung them into the fire. "They were written to *me*," she said, "not the public!" and she set the chimney on fire, and her children ran in — "The chimney's on fire!" "Never mind!" she said, and went on burning. I would like to raise an altar to that old lady and burn incense upon it.[44]

Tennyson again signals his wish to have the privacy of his letters respected, as 'altar' and 'incense' raise the sense that the possession of such papers should be repected as a sacred trust. This is an idea which is also enshrined in *To —, After Reading a Life and Letters*. The closed door or receptacle which has a seal upon it is sanctified by 'sacred' and 'betray the trust'. The Poet's prepublished work is 'a sacred deposit'[45], the Poet's

private life is 'sacred' — 'an innermost sanctuary'[46] —, and so to intrude upon it and make it public, is a violation.

Tennyson realised 'that against his recorded desire, he too must abide the natural fate, the penalty in his eyes, of a "Life and Letters"'.[47] As Cardinal Newman observed about his own biography, 'if friends do not write a life, strangers, who know nothing of me, will be sure to do it instead'.[48] In an attempt to ensure that he was not moulded all awry, Tennyson entrusted his son, Hallam, with the sacred duty of writing his biography. This 'should be final and full enough to preclude the chance of further and unauthentic biographies', and would reveal what his father had privately written and said, in a way which would not fully expose 'the innermost sanctuary of his being'.[49]

In the Preface of *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son* (1897), Hallam Tennyson revealed that he had 'quoted from many manuscripts never meant for the public eye, many of which I have burnt according to his instructions'.[50] That Hallam Tennyson burnt these manuscripts only after he had selected portions of them for publication, was a very liberal interpretation of his father's instructions. Although FitzGerald had burnt Thackeray's letters to him, he also admitted that 'I have cut out and preserve[d] many *parts* of these letters'.[51] This form of preservation is the same kind of embalming which Henry Hallam undertook when preparing his son's *Remains*: anything which might be thought to offend the public ideal of the author were removed and then destroyed. Thus, those letters by Tennyson which Hallam

Tennyson did publish in his *Memoir* are often heavily edited, rewritten and rearranged without any acknowledgement.

In Tennyson's *The Lover's Tale,* Julian suffers a bereavement of a kind, what he calls 'my loss', when he learns that Camilla is to marry Lionel. Meeting Lionel, Julian speaks thus:

> Was mine a mood
> To be invaded rudely, and not rather
> A sacred, secret, unapproached woe,
> Unspeakable? I was shut up with Grief;
> She took the body of my past delight,
> Narded and swathed and balmed it for herself,
> And laid it in a sepulchre of rock
> Never to rise again. I was led mute
> Into her temple like a sacrifice;
> I was the High Priest in her holiest place,
> Not to be loudly broken in upon.[52]

Tennyson's feeling that grief is 'Not to be loudly broken in upon' is shared by other condolers. In his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam, dated 4 October 1833, Sir Henry Holland felt 'most ashamed at breaking in upon your grief with any enquiries or attempts at condolences & consolation'.[53] What makes Tennyson's caution peculiarly his own, however, is that this hesitation does not just remain in the realm of a social concern. Tennyson's hesitation rises out of the sacred nature of privacy and the sacred nature of grief, and becomes swathed with a sense of guilt about profaning the 'holiest place'. The bereaved are 'narded' ('an aromatic balsam or ointment' [OED] used to anoint corpses]. For Tennyson, a letter of condolence is a dreadful duty, as it involves finding a way of approaching and speaking of 'A sacred, secret, unapproached woe, / Unspeakable'.

Tennyson's letter of condolence (dated 12 March 1861) to the Duchess of Argyll, on the death of her father, begins:

> My dear friend
> I do not know the measure of your sorrow but know that you must be sorrowing, and sorrow for the loss of one so near is so sacred that I hesitate to approach you even with a kind word and wish lest I should disturb the silence. — My one word and wish is only God bless you — in which I need not say that my wife cordially joins —[54]

Tennyson avoids the commonplace verb 'intrude', and his 'I hesitate to approach you...lest I should disturb', is made less intrusive, for rather than intruding, or thrusting, himself (or apologising for thrusting himself) upon the bereaved, Tennyson's delaying grammar — 'to approach' is a prolative infinitive (that is, the sense of 'hesitate' is carried over to the infinitive) —, puts him at a more respectful distance. His long first sentence reads as a long and reverent approach: he is, as it were, getting up the courage to disturb the silence of the Duchess' sacred sorrow. Thus, Tennyson's hesitation not only recognises that silence is a necessary constituent of grief, but it does so with a respect for the sacred nature of sorrow which makes the silence appear holy. 'The silence' is deep, for it speaks both of the silence in which the bereaved Duchess begins to engage in the absorbing work of mourning, and also of the sound of a voice which is still.

That Tennyson hesitates to approach 'even *with* a kind word and wish', makes this kind word and wish sound like an accompanying object which is offered up to the bereaved as the least and only offering which can be made. 'Even with *a* kind word and wish' also

enforces this feeling that such an offer is slight, and may, in any case, be presumptuous or profane. Thus, in the next sentence, Tennyson does not emphasise what kind of word and wish this is: 'My one word and wish' allows the Duchess to be the judge of its quality. Rather than assuming that the bereaved have no choice but to accept the condolences which have been thrust upon them, Tennyson recognises that a word and wish can only be offered, and thus, he also allows for the possibility that such an offer might not be accepted.

Even hesitating to approach 'A sacred, secret, unapproached woe, / Unspeakable' with a kind word and wish, could be a violation. This is how Tennyson ends his letter of condolence to Princess Alice, after the death of her father, Prince Albert (c. 23 December 1861):

> I only know that I write in pure sympathy with your affliction and that of your R. mother —
> 1) and if I sin against precedent in so doing
> 2) and if I have seemed in any way to have violated the sanctity of your sorrow
> 3) and if I have troubled you in vain forgive me as your Father would have forgiven me.[55]

The use of a list has a controlling effect. What might have sounded fulsome and self-conscious as prose — the uninterrupted crescendo of the anaphora ('and if I...and if I have...and if I have...') —, is made more matter of fact by its division into numbered points. This rather business-like arrangement is transformed by the religious nature of its contents ('sin', 'violated', 'sanctity', 'forgive'). Tennyson's third item ('your Father would have forgiven') has an echo of the Lord's Prayer

('Our Father...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'), but Tennyson avoids trespassing upon the sanctity of her sorrow, by not asserting his condolences. The repetition of 'and if I' allows the Princess a variety of possible responses, and Tennyson takes his leave, withdrawing, as it were, rather than imposing, the boundaries of his own ego, with a respectful bow. As the Duke of Argyll recalled, Tennyson 'was a man of the noblest humility I have ever known.'[56]

Another means of Tennyson being able to put himself at a respectful distance is provided by his offer of condolences on the death of Viscountess Boyne (one of Tennyson's cousins by his aunt Elizabeth). Instead of writing a letter of condolence to the bereaved Lord Boyne, after the death of his wife, Tennyson sent his condolences to him via a letter (dated 2 May 1870) to Ellen (Tennyson D'Eyncourt) Bunbury (another cousin of Tennyson's, by his uncle Charles):

> I do not know how Lord Boyne bears it: I fear he suffers dreadfully, nor do I know whether to write to him in his first grief — whether I should do more harm than good: yet as it might seem unkind or neglectful if I did not write, I send a little note with such word of comfort as I could give — and this you may read to him or not as it seems best to you or your husband.[57]

'I send a little note...and this you may read to him' sounds as though there is, or ought to have been, an enclosure with his letter. It seems, however, that it is this very note to Bunbury which is also intended for Lord Boyne. Thus, Tennyson's 'word of comfort' is not directly expressed (as it is in his letter of condolence to the Duchess quoted above: 'God bless you').

Instead, the comfort derives from Tennyson's hesitancy (which again takes the form of one long sentence), and from his cautious laying out of all of the possible ways by which he, as a condoler, might be misunderstood and the bereaved Lord Boyne harmed. By listing all these possibilities, Tennyson demonstrates his sensitivity to the possibility that Lord Boyne is suffering dreadfully. At the same time, however, Tennyson does not attempt to assert this, and thereby confine him: Tennyson only 'fear[s] he suffers dreadfully', he does not presume to know: 'I do not know how Lord Boyne bears it [that is, the death of his wife]', as he did not presume in his letter of condolence to the Duchess of Argyll, which begins, 'I do not know the measure of your sorrow'. Thus, Tennyson make his condolences dependent, not on the offering, but on the willingness to receive. He avoids intruding, by allowing Lord Boyne a variety of responses both to his bereavement and also to Tennyson's letter of condolence to him.

Tennyson's fears that his writing to Lord Boyne will 'do more harm than good', is similar to Sir Bedevere's dilemma in *Morte d'Arthur*, about how to act when charged by the dying Arthur to return Excalibur to the lake:

> What good shall follow this, if this were done?
> What harm, undone?[59]

Since words have the power to '*do* more harm than good', an utterance is felt to have the force of an action. Richard Chevenix Trench, in his essay *On the Morality in Words:*, points the implication of such a view:

> Is there not something very solemn and very awful in wielding such an instrument as this of language, so mighty to wound or to heal, to kill or to make alive?[59]

There is, therefore, an awful charge attached to the act of speaking or writing, but it is not just the fact that language can harm which means that those who wield it should take special care. A belief in God and the Last Judgement, also means that those who wield words irresponsibly will ultimately be held responsible for such actions. Cardinal Newman speaks of this in his sermon, *Unreal Words:*

> what is said of profession of discipleship applies undoubtedly in its degree to *all* profession. To make professions is to play with edged tools, unless we attend to what we are saying. Words have a meaning whether we mean that meaning or not; and they are imputed to us in their real meaning, when our not meaning it is our own fault. He who takes God's Name in vain, is not counted guiltless because he means nothing by it, — he cannot frame a language for himself; and they who make professions, of whatever kind, are heard in the sense of those professions, and are not excused because they themselves attach no sense to them. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned".[60]

Tennyson's guilty feeling that words have a continued life and can 'do more harm than good' was not only confined to, or by, the action of condoling. When a Miss Emily Ritchie visited Tennyson in 1869 she observed that

> He used the fewest words I ever heard any one use to express his ideas, or to recount an experience, or to tell an anecdote (always a large element in his talk), but each word was the right one, and his use of the English language was unlike anybody else's for force and dignity.[61]

Furthermore, the fact that words were the very substance of Tennyson's profession of poet, meant that there was even more of a solemn and awful charge attached to his use of words. Since his

words were uttered publicly, they had a greater potential 'to wound or kill', or 'do more harm than good', than the words of those who were able to utter more privately. Although the words of a private man might have only a temporary effect, being forgotten by all but God, the Poet's words could go on doing good or harm, once they had achieved what Arthur Hallam called, 'the eternity of Print'.[62] This view partly explains why Tennyson 'hated inaccuracy'.[63] In a letter to his publisher, Edward Moxon (written on ?25 May 1847), Tennyson complained about the proofs of *The Princess* (finally published in December 1847):

> The printers are awful zanies, they print erasures and corrections too, and other sins they commit of the utmost inhumanity.[64]

It was with this in mind that Tennyson commissioned Forster to 'see that there *are no mistakes*' when *The Charge of the Light Brigade* was reprinted for soldiers in the Crimea, in August 1855.[65] Geoffrey Hill, much pained by the atrocities of the Second World War, has remarked, in his essay, *Poetry as 'Menance' and 'Atonement'*, that the difference between a sin and a mistake might reduce a writer's 'empirical guilt...to an anxiety about *faux pas*'.[66] A mistake, however, can burgeon into a sin. It was because of 'an order which / Someone had blundered' that the Light Brigade had made its fateful charge. By printing the poem, Tennyson sought to correct a past blunder of his own: his revision in 1855, in which he had actually omitted the line (along with seven others), 'some one had blundered'. Moreover, since it was reported that half the lines of soldiers were already singing lines from the poem from memory, it was imperative to send printed

copies of the poem at once, in order to prevent its lines from being 'shattered and sundered'. 'For Heaven's sake, get *this* copy fairly printed at once', Tennyson commanded.[67]

In Tennyson's letters of condolence to the Duchess of Argyll, Princess Alice and Ellen Bunbury (on the death of Viscountess Boyne) quoted above, Tennyson's hesitation is made up of his guilty sense that he is violating the private sanctity of their sorrow. His hesistancy takes the form of a long sentence, and is perhaps accounted for, in part, by the fact that, in all three cases, Tennyson was not close either to the bereaved or to the deceased. When considering Tennyson's letters of condolence to close friends, therefore, there is another aspect to Tennyson's hesitation. This can be seen in Tennyson's letter of condolence to his friend, Frederick Locker, on the death of his wife, Lady Charlotte.

With much enjoyment, Tennyson and Locker had travelled to France in 1868 and Switzerland in 1869. Lady Charlotte had furnished and stocked the Tennysons' London pied-a-terre, taken in 1869, in part out of a desire to be nearer to the Lockers. On the death of Lady Charlotte, Tennyson begins his letter of condolence to Locker dated 28 April 1872, with a murmur:

> I scarcely dare to write. The shock must have been so terrible, just when things seemed better. I would we could know how you have borne it, beloved friends.[68]

The sincerity of the word 'scarcely' is borne out by the brevity of the first sentence. To begin with, he does only dare as far as

the object of that daring. Although Tennyson knows both the bereaved and the deceased, he does not presume to determine what must have been the reaction to the news of her death: 'The shock must have been so terrible' is eloquent in its reticence because the conditional tense means that it does not assert, but allows Locker a variety of other unspecified responses. 'I would we could know how you have borne it' is similarly unrestricting and accepting, because it does not make Locker feel obliged to try and tell how. Moreover, although the 'you' appears to be singular, the plural of 'beloved friends' at the end of the sentence, includes both Frederick Locker and his daughter, as well as Lady Locker (and also the Tennysons) in the shock of separation. 'Beloved friends', is also a demonstration of Tennyson's affection and reverence for the bereaved and the deceased, reminding Locker that this letter is from his 'beloved friends' (an offer borne out by the letter's end: 'Ever your affectionate / Alfred and Emily Tennyson'). His use of 'I' and 'we' and 'you' and 'friends', therefore, creates a community of the living and the dead. Thus, the force and dignity of this letter derives from the fact that Tennyson has used the fewest words possible, and yet, each word is the right one, because the dual nature of his words means that the Lockers' past and future state and conduct are not confined.

Dickens, too, refers to the sacred nature of grief in his letter of condolence to George Beadnell (the father of Maria Beadnell, whom Dickens had loved and unsuccessfully courted from 1830 to 1833), on the death of his wife, also named Maria, (dated 19 October 1849):

My Dear Sir

Absence from town prevented my receiving your sad intelligence in due course. I am but now in possession of it.

Believe me that I feel the sympathy of an old friend, with you in your affliction; and that the memory of many old kindnesses, bestowed upon me when I was a mere boy, rises before me vividly, in connexion with your melancholy tidings. I hardly dare to say to you, whose grief is of a sacred kind, how much I felt your letter, and how many affecting and regretful thoughts it awakened within me.

I am sure few better creatures ever lived. Hard as the separation is to bear, — harder in some sense because of that, — it is in the mercy of God, I know, to make that conviction a comfort to you.

And when the first shock of such a heavy trial is lightened by Time, the attachment of the children she bore you, and of their children too, will not be the less deep or the less consoling because one of the springs of its life, is, for a little while, dried and seen no more.

In their love and in everything, may you find some comfort! My wife and I have talked about you very much, and are full of heartfelt wishes for your peace.

Ever faithfully yours
CHARLES DICKENS[69]

The formal beginning of this letter of condolence —

My Dear Sir

Absence from town prevented my receiving your sad intelligence in due course. I am but now in possession of it.

— is very similar to the beginning of the only other surviving letter written by Dickens on the same day:

Sir,

Absence from town has prevented my receiving your letter until now. I beg you to accept this as a sufficient excuse for my having delayed to answer it.[70]

Here Dickens employs the same locution in both his letter of condolence and in his letter accepting an invitation from a Mr James Gilbert, to preside at the first public dinner of the Newsvendors' Benevolent and Provident Institution. Although, as

Dickens remarked in each letter, the first of these events is 'sad', the other 'happy', this intelligence is not borne out in the opening words of these letters. Approaching Beadnell in an unhesitating manner, can be read as an attempt to steady him. Dickens' business-like tone could be read as a means of rousing Beadnell from his grief back to the business of life. However, that he does not choose words which mark a distinction between how to apologise and approach an acquaintance or friend who has been recently bereaved, and how to apologise and reply to the Secretary of an Institution, seems insensitive. The similarity of Dickens' words in these instances, suggest that Dickens has not paid attention to the particularity of Beadnell's condition. The first word of his letter — 'Absence' — hits upon the very reason for him having to write his letter of condolence to Beadnell.

Although Dickens' 'I hardly dare to say to you whose grief is of a sacred kind' (at the end of the second paragraph of his letter to Beadnell) is equivalent to Tennyson's, 'I scarcely dare to write' (in his letter of condolence to Locker, quoted above), the additional meaning of 'hardly' — 'with difficulty' — is not confirmed by what follows. That Beadnell's 'grief is of a sacred kind', has not altered Dickens' approach. The rhythm of the first half of this sentence moves without hesitation or difficulty. Indeed, if divided off into lines,

> I hardly dare to say to you, whose grief
> Is of a sacred kind, how much I felt
> Your letter, and how

is a scrap of blank verse.

Although this might be involuntary and unconscious — Tennyson's 'I scarcely dare to write' scans as three iambic feet —, it should be viewed in the light of Dickens' general writing habits. In 1845, Dickens made the following admission:

> I am perfectly aware that there are several passages in my books which, with very little alteration — sometimes with none at all — will fall into blank verse, if divided off into Lines. It is not affectation in me, nor have I the least desire to write them in that metre; but I run into it, involuntarily and unconsciously, when I am very much in earnest. I do so even in speaking.[71]

Coleridge remarked that 'it is almost characteristic of indifferent prose writers that they should be constantly slipping into scraps of metre'.[72] Dickens told Forster: 'I *cannot* help it [falling into blank verse]', and entreated him, if he found any instances of blank verse in the proofs of the *Battle of Life*, to 'knock out a word's brains here and there'.[73]

Dickens' loss of control ('fall') resulted from the peculiar nature of his composition (both topics are examined in more detail in Chapters VI and VII). On 25 November 1835, Dickens wrote to his fiance, Catherine Hogarth, explaining the necessity for his absence from her:

> I really have no alternative but to remain at home to-night, and "get on" [with the prose sketch, *A Visit to Newgate*] in good earnest. You know I have frequently said that my composition is peculiar; I never can write with effect — especially in the serious way — until I have got my steam up, or in other words until I have become so excited with my subject that I cannot leave off.[74]

His feeling that there is 'no alternative' cannot be wholly explained by the fact that his memory of the visit to Newgate was

beginning to fade, and that he had a publisher's deadline to meet. The injunction, 'no alternative', together with his reference to an express train, suggests that his writing is driven by a sense of compulsion and possession. He loses control and falls under the influence of his subject ('I cannot leave off'). Having begun his letter of condolence to Beadnell with a business-like apology for the late arrival of his condolences ('Absence from town'), Dickens gets his steam up, and then runs into the blank verse of 'I hardly dare to say to you'. Being 'very much in earnest', he is then unable 'to leave off':

> Hard as the separation is to bear, — harder in some sense because of that, — it is in the mercy of God, I know, to make that conviction a comfort to you.
>
> And when the first shock of such a heavy trial is lightened by Time, the attachment of the children she bore you, and of their children too, will not be the less deep or the less consoling because one of the springs of its life, is, for a little while, dried and seen no more.[75]

In contrast to Tennyson's cautious 'The shock must have been so terrible', the certainty of Dickens' 'Hard as the separation is to bear' asserts, and therefore, limits Beadnell's reaction. In contrast to Tennyson's hesitation, Dickens offers conviction ('I am sure...I know'), and instruction and assertion ('is lightened...will not be'). Whereas Tennyson's letters of condolence are marked by hesitation, Dickens' are marked by the rhythm of momentum (got my steam up') and a lack of restraint ('I cannot leave off'). Tennyson's condolences respect the silent and solitary nature of bereavement. Dickens' purpose is to 'fill up the gap',[76] or 'the Abyss of grief',[77] with words which seek to rouse. In the face of the blank pressure of grief, however, the

bereaved and the would-be condoler, often feel that words are empty, or are of no use.

VI

VAIN WORDS

> Those who were about to enter Little Nell's death chamber 'drew close together', and were capable of only 'a few whispered words — not unbroken by emotion, or easily uttered',
>
> *The Old Curiosity Shop*,[1]

The main studies of bereavement by Lindemann, G. Gorer, J. Bowlby, and C. M. Parkes, agree that are common elments in responses to the news of the death of a loved friend or relative. The bereaved commonly experience a sense of anxious restlessness, a loss of appetite and a difficulty in sleeping. There are often digestive disturbances, palpitations, headaches, and muscular aches and pains. Parkes concludes that there is 'a general disturbance in the nervous control of bodily processes'.[2]

That grief results in such physiological disturbances, means that the very physical mechanisms of speech and writing are disturbed. Lindemann found that immediately after the news of a death, the bereaved experience

> a feeling of tightness in the throat, choking with shortness of breath, need for sighing and an empty feeling in the abdomen[3]

and he goes on to observe that one of the most striking features of bereavement is 'the marked tendency to sighing respiration'.[4] The bereaved's capacity for speech is disturbed by this tendency and by acute and episodic pangs of grief (outbursts of extremely intense distress and/or anger), frequently accompanied by weeping.

Since these waves of discomfort can be precipitated by all thought and reference to the deceased ('by visits, by mention of the deceased, and by receiving sympathy'),[5] the disintegration of words, applies to both speech and writing. This is Newman's reply to a letter of condolence from a Mrs Bellasis, after the death of his friend, Ambrose St John:

> I am so pulled down that I cannot write without bringing on a flood of tears — not I trust from want of resignation, but from love of him I have lost.[6]

Words are broken up, as well as broken down, by the moans, sobs, and cries which constitute weeping. On 27 May 1841, Dickens' friend Basil Hall, whose youngest son had recently died, told Dickens why he had not replied to his letter of condolence sooner: 'I am in such real distress in consequence of this loss, that I feel weakened in powers of expression & description —'.[7] Such disintegration ('with no language but a cry' LIV) could also apply to the writer of a letter of condolence, since he or she had suffered a bereavement also. After the death of Cicero's daughter, Tullia, in March 45 B.C., Servius Sulpicius wrote:

> All condolence is a wretched and painful business, because those who should give it, relatives and friends, are equally distressed, and can hardly make the attempt for grief, so that they themselves seem to need a comforter instead of being able to serve as a comforter to others.[8]

In Tennyson's letter of condolence on the death of Edmund Lushington's sister, he wrote that as he was writing 'Poor Emmy [Tennyson's wife, Emily] is writing and weeping at once'.[9] When Edith Simcox wrote to Johnny Cross on the day George Lewes died, it was 'through blinding tears'.[10] Thus, for the condoler also,

expression could be disturbed by the physiological disturbances of sympathetic grief.

The Victorian critic, R. H. Hutton, felt that Tennyson's poems possessed 'the lavish strength of what may be called the bodily element in poetry'.[11] In Tennyson's poetry of grief, the bodily element is composed of Tennyson's sense of how, in grief, there is a general disturbance in the nervous control of bodily processes. Section XXIII of *In Memoriam*, and indeed the whole poem, records the 'breaking into song by fits' which is characteristic of grief. Tennyson's poetry of grief, however, does not just record those occasions when 'the sensuous frame / Is racked with pangs' (LI). Tennyson evokes the sense that grief, as with any other strong primal emotion, such as anger, love and hate, is initially experienced in a deeply physical way. In Tennyson's *The Lover's Tale*, Julian recalls that when he was with Camilla on 'what our people call "The Hill of Woe"':

> I did not speak: I could not speak my love.
> Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-depths.
> Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,
> Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
> Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
> So that they pass not to the shrine of sound.'[12]

Grief can also be said to be an emotion which 'lieth deep', at times 'fathom-deep': in *To J.S.*, grief 'loveth her own anguish deep', and in section LXXX of *In Memoriam*, 'The grief of my loss...[is] / A grief as deep as life or thought'. Deep grief then, also 'dwells not in lip-depths', although many of the words of condolence have become only lip-deep, having been rendered conventional and commonplace through constant repetition.

For Tennyson, writing or speech which is true, is a union of feeling and thought: the heart and brain. In grief, however, this rising of feeling into thought and into spoken or written words, is disturbed. As with other deeply felt emotions, in grief there is a dislocation between feeling and thought and speech; the heart and brain are 'unquiet', both in themselves, and in their relation. In section XX of *In Memoriam*, the bereaved poet has 'lighter moods', when it is hoped

> That out of words a comfort win;
> But there are other griefs within,
> And tears that at their fountain freeze.[13]

Out of the words 'within' — which comes out of Hamlet's telling Gertrude, 'But I have that within which passes show' (I. i. 85) — and the tears that do not flow, but 'freeze', comes not a comfort, but a feeling of imprisonment. As Simcox recorded about the bereaved George Eliot, 'There are times when she cannot shed a tear and the physical oppression is terrible.'[14] The oppression caused by 'tears which at their fountain freeze', appears to be the build up of feeling which cannot be brought to the surface, but is frozen at its point of surfacing. 'But open converse is there none' (XX) then, bemoans not only the difficulty of speaking with the dead but also the difficulty of realising the depth of grief in the surface of words and tears.

In ***Break, break, break***, there is the struggling expiration,

> I would that my tongue could utter
> The thoughts that arise in me.[15]

Although thought cannot take place without language, in grief,

there is a disparity between the inner language of thought, and its outward expression in speech or words. Here again, is a sense of imprisonment, of being 'sometimes in my sorrow shut' (XXIII). It is not only grief's physiological disturbance which means that the tongue cannot utter. In the face of a great bereavement, a single voice can seem weak or even useless, for the tongue seems a slight and inadequate organ with which to bear the rising tide of feeling and thought. As Hutton observed about *Break, break, break,* the poem conveys 'the feeling of helplessness with which the deeper emotions break against the hard and rigid element of human speech'.[16] Although the poem is written, Hutton writes of the poem in terms of speech. Tennyson's 'tongue' and 'utter', with its orientation towards 'human speech', is a metaphor for all expression, including the poem's expression

In Tennyson, the metaphor of the sea embodies the physical disturbances of grief, such as the feeling of restlessness ('calm despair and wild unrest' XVI), which Lindemann described as 'a sensation of somatic distress occuring in waves'.[17] Moreover, this metaphor also expresses the difference between the surface of language and the depth of grief. In the deeply felt trauma of grief, words can seem as though they are only surface emanations, as in section LII of *In Memoriam:*

> My words are only words, and moved
> Upon the topmost froth of thought.[18]

Such words are like flotsam and jetsam ('What words are these have fallen from me?' [XVI]) and are not entirely in the control of their speaker or author, who perceives that there is a gulf

between his words and his feeling. The surface of expressed words then, is not always intimate with the depths of grief.

The sense that words have become vain or empty has a direct correspondence in another aspect of the physical response to grief, which commonly involves 'an empty feeling in the abdomen and epigastrum',[19] a sensation which has psychological and emotional overtones. Arthur Hallam's uncle, Sir Henry Elton, wrote to Tennyson informing him of Arthur Hallam's death: 'At the desire of a most afflicted family...[who] are unequal, from the Abyss of grief into which they have fallen, to do it themselves'.[20] Francis Doyle, in his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam, felt that the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, 'has left a void in all our hearts'.[21] Section XIII of *In Memoriam* records that there is 'A void where heart on heart reposed' (XIII). After the death of her companion and adviser, John Brown, Queen Victoria informed Tennyson (in a letter dated 14 August 1883), that she was

> very desolate and forlorn...The comfort of my daily life is gone — the void is terrible — the loss is irreparable![22]

Towards the end of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, there is a fuller elaboration on such an experience of a terrible void. After the burial of Little Nell, her grandfather suffers a collapse, and there is the following authorial comment:

> If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death —— the weary void —— the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn — the connexion between inanimate and senseless things, and the object of recollection, when every household god becomes a monument and every room a grave — if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess how, for many days, the

old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort.[23]

The weariness of 'the weary void' is realised here by the length of the sentence, and its repetitions. The punctuation of '— the weary void —' (and Queen Victoria's 'the void is terrible —') can be felt as an imitation of 'the Abyss of grief' and of 'the blank that follows death'. '—' is not only a representation of the silence of the deceased and of the bereaved's difficulty in expressing the 'terrible' feelings for that which 'is gone'. '—' also represents the disintegration of language and the bereaved's 'sense of desolation' — the empty feeling in the abdomen — as well as the 'something' which the bereaved is 'seeking', yet cannot find. This 'something' can be seen as words which are not 'inanimate and senseless things', but which will express and describe the '—' of grief.

In the 'Abyss of grief' then, lie linguistic paradoxes. The bereaved are left with having to find words which express the '—' or empty feeling of bereavement. This '—' is not only the bereaved's own 'sense of desolation'. Where the deceased once was, there is now — humanly speaking —, nothing, except an empty form. The bereaved and the condoler are left with having to find words to express the changed and negative condition both of the bereaved and also of the deceased, ('He is not here' (VII); 'Your friend, my much loved nephew, Arthur Hallam, is no more —').[24] The loved one's is 'a vanished life' (X); his 'place is empty' (XIII), there is 'the vacant chair' (XX), 'The chambers emptied of delight...For all is dark where thou art not' (XIII). As the deceased has become an empty form, devoid of thought and

feeling, so has the world and its words. Parkes states that

> The world of the bereaved person is in chaos...He feels as if the most important aspect of himself is gone and all that is left is meaningless and irrelevant.[25]

Words are amongst 'all that is left' for the bereaved, but as 'the world has become 'poor and empty', so its words are felt to have become, as Dickens felt in his letter of condolence to John Leech, 'poor and feeble'. The death of a loved one is strangely echoed in the death of the language used to sound 'the Abyss of grief'. The loss of meaning which is experienced during bereavement, is echoed in the bereaved's feeling that words have become 'meaningless and irrelevant'. This is a kind of second bereavement in itself. The bereaved are forlorn, having lost a fair companion, and with this loss, the fair companion of words. It seems a forlorn hope to attempt to make good an 'irreparable' loss with utterances when nothing but the return of the lost person can bring true comfort.

That the news of a death, particularly a sudden death, can have an almost physical shock which has a numbing effect, means that there can be a delay before the full impact of the loss is fully realised. Disbelief and a feeling of unreality, can both result in stunned repetition of the news. These observations on the effects of bereavement on real people, are also seen in fictional responses to the news of a death. In *Macbeth*, when Malcolm asks Ross to tell him and Macduff 'the newest grief', Ross' news turns the 'general cause' of woe — the 'wounds' of Scotland — into a particular grief, of which 'the main part / Pertains to you [Macduff] alone' (IV. iii. 198-9). When Ross breaks the news that

Macduff's 'wife and babes / [had been] Savagely slaughter'd' (IV. iii. 204-5), the scene continues:

MACDUFF: My children too?

ROSS: Wife, children, servants, all
That could be found.

MACDUFF: And I must be from thence!
My wife kill'd too?

ROSS: I have said.

MALCOLM: Be comforted:
Let's make us medicine of our revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.

MACDUFF: He has no children. All my pretty ones?
Did you say all? O hell-kite ! All?
What ! all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?
(IV. iii. 211-19).

Macduff's repetition of 'all' and 'children' signifies his struggle to realise and take in the full reality of all his losses. Macduff is therefore engaged in part of 'the work of grief...[which is] declaring the [loved] object[s] to be dead'.[26] This is a process of realisation which can only take place slowly and gradually. The bereaved repeatedly recall and review their memories of the deceased. This is painful work, as with each recollection, the bereaved come to realise that now the object of these memories is no more. Freud observes that in mourning there can be 'a clinging to the [lost] object', whilst each single one of the memories and hopes through which the libido was attached to the lost object is gradually detached.[27] Since the libido is resistant to withdraw its attachment to a certain person, the links which bound the bereaved and the deceased together are therefore only severed slowly and gradually, and after numerous repetitions. Repetition then, can be said to be

part of the psychological process of mourning. Repetitions occur throughout mourning until the bereaved have given up the loved object as dead.

> The process [of emotional acceptance] is difficult, time-consuming, and painful. It seems that emotional acceptance can be achieved only as a consequence of fine-grained, almost filigree work with memory. It requires what appears to an observer to be a kind of obsessive review in which the widow or widower goes over and over the same thoughts and memories. If the process is going well, they are not quite the same thoughts and memories; there is movement — perhaps slow — from one emphasis to another, from one focus to another. Only if the process is stuck, as in chronic grief, will the review become truly obsessive, a continuing rehearsal of the same thoughts and memories.[28]

The bereaved often find that they have to repeatedly review the events which lead up to the death. Jane Welsh Carlyle died suddenly during her usual afternoon drive in Hyde Park. A few days before her funeral, the bereaved Carlyle made her carriage driver take him around the same route in the park, and making him show every point in the drive, ending at the hospital, where he gazed on the couch where she was laid. As a result of these repetitions, as has been seen, the widow or widower repeatedly encounters empty space where security once was. When Prince Albert died in December 1861, Queen Victoria told Gladstone that 'Every day seems to increase the intensity of sorrow which *nothing, nothing* can alleviate'.[29] Her repetition attempts to make real the intensity of the empty space of her bereavement. She has to repeat the same words, because, as in Lear's 'Never, never, never, never, never!', it is not possible to say it once in such a way that it would be there in its complete awefulness. Thus, this repetition is also an attempt to reach the lowest depths of 'the

Abyss of grief', to get at and so realise the feeling of grief which 'lieth deep...[and which] dwells not in lip-depths'.

In his poem, *The Thorn*, Wordsworth attempts to make a thorn, observed on the ridge of Quantock Hill, as impressive as the storm seen by him on the same day. The poem combines this real event with a fictional tale about a betrayed girl and her murdered child. Wordsworth's note to the poem in *Lyrical Ballads*, in which he states that 'poetry is the history or science of feelings'[30], establishes a link between real and fictional expressions of grief. In the note to *The Thorn*, Wordsworth remarks that

> every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of the language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character.[31]

Bowlby observed that repetition, as in the repetitive action of continual rocking backwards and forwards, could also be interpreted as a means of denying the reality of a death or loss. Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham (1974) recorded the case of a girl, aged seventeen months, who, in response to her mother being absent, said nothing but 'Mum, Mum, Mum' for three days.[32] By repeating the deceased's name, the bereaved are able not only to delay the deceased's final departure but also to keep the deceased present. The deceased are kept on the minds and the lips of the bereaved. The bereaved are able to cling to the deceased, as a child might cling to a departing mother, by their clinging to the deceased's name, or to a word associated with them. In the same way that a word repeated can deepen in its meaning, significance

and poetic intensity, so the repeated name of the deceased becomes a way for the bereaved to encapsulate them. The deceased's name 'takes on, by dint of repetition, a kind of substantiality, allowing it not only to refer to but almost to replace the dead'.[33]

On the other hand, a word which is constantly repeated can, like commonplaces, lose sight of its original meaning. Then the constant repetition of the same word is like a series of diminishing echoes which can end in the repeated word becoming little more than an empty form or hollow sound. With time, the fading of the memory, the diminishing of grief, and with constant repetition, the deceased's name can fail to encapsulate them. As Mrs Verloc in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, observed 'on the subject of the dead...Nothing brings them back'.[34]

Since the bereaved can receive many letters of condolence, as did Newman after the death of Ambrose St John, letters of condolence are repeated evidences of the fact that a loved one had died. In this way, letters can be seen as being one of the first occasions which engages the bereaved in the process of realising their grief. The repetition of the same or similar phrases from one letter to another, moreover, might also serve to facilitate the process of declaring the loved object to be dead. For these reasons, or in an attempt to deny the facts of the case, the bereaved might not read the letters of condolence sent to them. On the other hand, the bereaved might not be able to read letters of condolence, owing to the initial physical shock of a bereavement, which results in a feeling of numbness and unreality,

and in which every sound seems to have gone out of the world. Freud notes that in mourning there is a loss of interest in the outside world, in so far as it does not recall the one who is dead. So it is that after the death of his wife, Carlyle's heart was 'wholly *wae wae*; and occupied with one object'.[35] After looking at the faces among the little crowd at the funeral of his mother, David Copperfield remarked: 'I do not mind them — I mind nothing but my grief'.[36] Nearly a week after the death of George Lewes, Charles Lee Lewis wrote to Mme Louis Belloc with the news that George Eliot,

> is as you imagine quite incapable even of reading letters at present, and I am doing what I can to satisfy her friends with news. She hears from whom each letter is and then they are laid by for her to read some day when time has softened the anguish of the first terrible grief.[37]

Four days later, on 10 December 1878, he replied to Mrs Mark Pattison's letter of condolence to George Eliot:

> she is unable to attend to any letters, and whilst grateful for any signs of affection and sympathy has to tell me to explain to everyone that she is quite unable to respond.[38]

The letters of condolence received by Eliot in the anguish of her first terrible grief were more important to her as 'signs of affection and sympathy', than for anything that their actual contents might have to say. This, together with Eliot's admission that 'it was a long while before I read any letters',[39] is an action recognised by Browning in one sentence of his letter of condolence to her (2 Dec. 1878):

> You will probably read this after some time — if at all[40]

and by the one sentence which makes up the whole of Tennyson's

letter (3 Dec. 1878; *ATLC*, 13), on the same occasion:

> Dear friend
> Our affectionate sympathies are with you — that is all that can be said at present — and these are nothing to you at present — but for his sake accept them.[41]

Because Browning feels that his letter might be read 'after some time', he too, like Eliot's son, is looking towards 'some day when time has softened the anguish of the first terrible grief'. Moreover, because he is not certain that it will be read at all, there is something of a feeling in his letter that it does not entirely matter what he writes. Because of this, he passes over and does not address 'the anguish of the first terrible grief'. Tennyson's letter, on the other hand, is very much in the 'present'. Indeed, the repetition of this word is a tender reminder of Eliot's present condition which also looks forward to a time when 'these' (his sympathies and his words) might become present for her, and so be of some comfort. The repetition of a word can, therefore, also be a form of assertion and insistence. Each repetition is a means of making real, as it were, a word's meaning and import. And since each repetition insists upon and re-asserts the reality of the word 'present', it is also a means of making present, or 'making real' the loss.

It is, of course, a great irony that so much anguish should be devoted to writing letters of condolence which may not, or will not, or cannot, be read. After the death of his wife, Carlyle wrote to Mrs Austin:

> Thank you for your kind enquiry after me; I feel it all the kinder knowing too well that you are yourself so weary and heavy-laden [...] How I understand what you say about letters of condolence! I have burnt some scores of them,

unread except for the first line and the signature.[42]

If the bereaved are unable, or unwilling, to attend to letters, and are wholly occupied with one object, then it may be necessary for the condoler to keep repeating their words, in order to ensure that their words have penetrated the silence of the bereaved's sorrow. Tennyson's letter of condolence to Sophia Elmhirst, written after the death of her son (26 June 1871), is aware of and sensitive to such a reaction to letters of condolence such as that experienced by Eliot and Carlyle.

My dear Sophy
I ought to have written to you before to express my sympathy with you on the loss of your son: and I thought of writing at the moment when I first heard of your great affliction, but somehow I myself have always felt that letters of condolence when the grief is yet raw and painful are like vain voices in the ears of the deaf, not heard or only half-heard. The heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith — though I am not a stranger, indeed, but your old friend from childhood. However when Drummond and Catherine were here the other day, he said he thought you would be soothed by hearing from me: so I write, though I doubt whether I can bring you any solace, except indeed by stating my own belief that the son whom you loved is not really what we call dead, but more actually living than when alive here. You cannot catch the voice, or feel the hands, or kiss the cheek — that is all — a separation for an hour, not an eternal farewell. If it were not so, that which made us would seem too cruel a Power to be worshipped, and could not be loved. But I trust that you believe all this, and by this time have attained to some degree of tranquility: and your husband also. I hear that he was very amiable, and full of promise, and the manner of his death, and its taking place so far away from you, and its suddenness, must have so added sorrow to sorrow, that I almost fear you will think I write coldly, but I do not feel coldly.
Kindest remembrances to Elmhirst* and believe me,

Affectionately yours
A. Tennyson

*also to Hallidays.
He has said all I could say so much better than I could say it that I will only add I join with him and am
Affectionately yours
E. Tennyson[43]

Tennyson's 'I ought to have...and I thought of' are both

assertions and explanations, for according to convention, Tennyson's letter is rather late. He is, however, able to turn this to his advantage. Since letters of condolence 'when the grief is yet raw and painful are...not heard or only half-heard', his defence is that if he had written at this time, he might not have been 'heard' (as opposed to Browning, who felt he would probably not be 'read') in any case. Tennyson also allows for the possibility that her grief may still be raw (and so his words may still not be heard), in his repetition of 'the same words, or words of the same character': 'I heard...voices...not heard...half-heard...call...catch the voice...hearing ...I hear'. This is not just an 'accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of...[his] powers, or the deficiencies of the language'. Repeating the same or similar words is a means of penetrating the bereaved's sense of disbelief, numbness and distress. If they cannot hear, or are not listening, then it is necessary for Tennyson as a condoler who *is* listening to, and *can* catch the mood of his bereaved correspondent, to keep repeating words in order to make them and himself fully heard. Sometimes, words repeated firmly and calmly can provide a 'Balm of Consolation',[44] as in a Mother's quietening of her child's hurt with 'there, there'. This kind of soothing repetition is also felt in Tennyson's letter in its felicitious repetition of 'Affectionately yours'.

Tennyson's use of the word 'catch' — 'You cannot catch the voice' — rather than 'hear', goes some way to explain why the bereaved are deaf to the voices of the living. Condoler's 'call' while the bereaved are still straining and longing to 'catch', as

in *Break, Break, Break*, 'the sound of a voice that is still!'. Instead of listening to the voices of condolence, therefore, the bereaved are straining to 'catch' the deceased's voice. 'Catch' in the sense that the bereaved are trying to remember and fix in the memory the tones of the deceased's voice, and 'catch' in the sense that the bereaved are straining to detect the deceased's voice as it now is, 'Behind the veil, behind the veil' (LVII).

Newman's repetition in his letter of condolence to Wilfrid Wilberforce on the death of his father, Henry (23 Apr. 1873), recognises that, for a Christian, the first anguish of a bereavement can put a general faith in an after-life to a particular test:

> There never was a man more humble than your dear father — never one who so intimately realised what it was to die — and how little we know, and how much we have to know about it. Now he knows all: he knows all that we do not know. He has the reward of all his prayers; there is an end of all his fears. He has served God with a single aim all through his life, and he now understands how good it has been to have done so. I have known him most intimately for forty-seven years and he has always been the same.[45]

His repetition of 'now' — similar to Tennyson's repetition of 'at present' — is intimately related to his repetition of 'know', for it is because of Wilberforce's existence 'now', after death, that 'He now knows all'. It is because of what Wilberforce 'was' — he was humble, he prayed, 'he has served God' — that he is what he is 'now'. And it is by concentrating on what he is now, that Newman can present death not as 'an eternal farewell', but as a continuation — there is a fluidity in his use of tenses: Wilberforce is past - 'was', and 'known' - *and* present - 'has' and

'knows'. It is therefore implied that what 'He has always been...for forty-seven years', he 'now' ever shall be.

On 1 September 1860, Tennyson (then on a tour of Cornwall with Palgrave and Woolner) wrote to Emily Tennyson about the letter of condolence he had to write on the death of Sir John Simeon's wife:

> I will write to Simeon to-day, though I rather shun writing to him on such a subject, for what can one say, what comfort can one give?[46]

The unwritten answers to Tennyson's questions, 'nothing to be said', and 'no comfort' underlie, or hover over all letters of condolence. Faced with the reality of death and the pain of another's loss, a condoler has to try and say something when there is nothing anyone can say that can alter the painful fact that a loved one has died. Queen Victoria's 'Every day seems to increase the intensity of sorrow which *nothing nothing* can alleviate',[47] and Carlyle's feeling that in 'the state I am in...there is no alleviation possible' and that 'none can be expected to share with me — nor could in the least *help* me if they did',[48] express the feeling that the bereaved are shut in their sorrow. Such pained complaints also shut out all the entreaties of condoler. If words of comfort seem vain, and poor and feeble, and commonplace, and as nothing compared to the bereaved's grief, then there is little that a condoler can do but love and be silent. As Thomas Allbutt told the bereaved George Eliot, 'Before a sorrow like yours we can only be silent' (19 Jan 1879).[49]

Saying nothing, or saying that there is no comfort, however, is contrary to the whole convention of writing a letter of

condolence, and as has been seen, it would be felt as a dereliction of duty if an old and professedly attached friend of the bereaved or the deceased remained silent. A condoler has to find words for a situation in which it is felt that no words are possible. Tennyson's letter of condolence on the death of Lord Houghton's wife (already quoted in Chapter IV), manages to find a way to write of the dumbness of grief without merely being dumb:

> My dear Houghton
> I was the other day present at a funeral here, and one of the chief mourners reached her hand silently almost over the grave, and I as silently gave her mine. No words were possible; and this littlenote which can do nothing to help you in your sorrow, is just such a reaching of the hand to you, my old college comrade of forty years standing.[50]

John Morley, in his letter of condolence to George Eliot wrote that the death of George Lewes was 'a loss for which there can be no words' (5 Dec. 1878).[51] Although Tennyson realises that no words are possible, he does not express this commonplace feeling directly. Instead, he uses the past occasion of inarticulacy somewhere else — 'the other day...at a funeral here' —, to express this commonplace in the present situation, without actually speaking it. Whereas, as John Bayley has observed, it is Tennyson's 'genius [is] to linger in a situation in which nothing appears to be done', other condolers admit that there is nothing to be done.[52] Writing a letter of condolence, dated 23 January 1828, after the death of Newman's sister, Mary, in January 1828, R. I. Wilberforce admitted that:

> I cannot tell you how deeply I sympathised in your affliction.[53]

After the death of George Lewes in November 1879, his son, Charles Lee Lewis, received a letter of condolence from George du

Maurier (1 Dec. 1878):

> My dear Lewes.
> I cannot tell you how grieved and shocked I was today at hearing the sudden news of your father's death.[54]

Both the bereaved and the condoler share the sense of being 'sometimes in my sorrow shut', and of the uselessness or failure of words with which to express such sorrow. After the death of his wife, Carlyle told Lady Asburton in response to her letter of condolence to him, that:

> I cannot write even to you.[55]

After the death of Ambrose St John, Newman, in his reply to Lord Blachford's letter of condolence (31 May 1875), admitted that

> I cannot use many words.[56]

That it is possible to trace the same or similar expressions of this sense of inadequacy, makes 'I cannot tell you...', one of the commonplaces of condolence (Hamlet: 'But I have that within which passes show' [I. i. 85]; 'Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent' Hippolytus, 607, Seneca).[57] That the greatest griefs were inexpressible is a commonplace, in fact, 'I cannot tell you how..' is an instance of the rhetorical figure of adynaton, 'a kind of paradox...by which we admit that our message is beyond the power of words to convey.'[58]

'I cannot tell you how...' is an admission of a condoler's failure to express the depth and sincerity of his sympathetic sorrow. And yet, the working out of the paradox within the trope does allow sympathy to be expressed, for it is through

saying that 'I cannot tell' that a condoler is able to at least indicate that there is that within which passes show. The condoler's sense of failure, which conveys a sense of pity for the emptiness of words, also implies a condoler's sense of pity for the bereaved's sense of powerlessness and emptiness.

The trope of adynaton allows letter writers to take responsibility for their inability to tell. 'I cannot tell' implies that the words were there, but that the writer of a letter of condolence was unable to locate them, or to bring them to the surface. Whereas these condolers feel that they have failed words, others attempt to put the blame on language, as if the inabilty to tell was a result of words having failed them. After the death of his wife, Carlyle concluded that:

> On the whole there is no use in writing here. There is even a lack of *sincerity* in what I write (strange but true). The thing I *would* say, I cannot. All words are idle...[59]

Emily Susannah Clarke's letter of condolence to George Eliot (2 Dec. 1878) begins:

> Words fail me to say how grieved I am.[60]

After the death of A. P. Stanley's mother, Jowett confessed that

> I have no faith in words being able to alleviate such a blow.[61]

Herbert Spencer began his letter to George Eliot (5 Dec. 1878) thus:

> I have hesitated these several days whether to write — feeling strongly how utterly vain are words.[62]

The bereaved Carlyle and the condoling Clarke, Jowett and Spencer all imply that it is words rather than themselves which have the capacity. or incapacity in these instances, to say. They were prepared to speak, but words have failed them. Tennyson is typically more cautious in assigning blame for the difficulties of expressing grief and sympathy. In his letter of condolence to Frederick Locker, on the death of Locker's wife, Tennyson manages to leave open the question of whether words fail him, or he fails words:

> Vain words all, I know, forgive them as all that one poor human sympathy can do at such an hour.[63]

It would seem that 'all that one poor human sympathy can do' is to perform some not wholly specified action with 'vain words'. 'Do' seems to apply to 'vain words', but the absence of another verb means that Tennyson does not make explicit either what can be done with such words, or what such words can (or might) do. If 'all that one poor human sympathy can do' is to offer 'vain words', then this offer is only implied. Indeed, the tone of 'vain words' becomes even less emphatic as the sentence continues into 'all, I know', for the comma after 'all' creates a pause, in which 'all' is poised momentarily between 'words' and 'I'. Although Tennyson recognises that in one sense all words are idle, yet in another sense they are anything but, for the sense that the whole phrase has undergone a syntactical inversion, or an ellipsis, has the effect of shifting the phrase's meaning between 'All words are vain, I know', and 'Vain words are all I know.' Exactly what the 'I' knows about itself and about words, is not asserted, but is left unsaid. Unlike the cry of 'Vain solace!' at

the beginning of the fourteenth stanza of *To J. S.*, or 'Vague words!' at the beginning of the twelfth stanza of section XCV of *In Memoriam,* the absence of speech and exclamation marks in the phrase 'vain words all, I know', together with Tennyson's avoidance of the verbs 'say' and 'tell' (common to the figure of adynaton), means that the phrase does not attempt to represent a spoken utterance. At the same time, however, the fact that any final sense is left hovering between two interpretations, means that the phrase is not idle, but is tremulous with a kind of half-spoken murmuring. Tennyson's phrase succeeds in creating an ambiguity about how he might have failed words, or they might have failed him.

Whereas 'Vain words all, I know' is typical of Tennyson's hesitancy, Dickens, in his letter of condolence to his friend and illustrator, John Leech, is typically more decided:

> All consolation is poor and feeble in the first weight of such an affliction, I know, but I cannot help sending you this word of affectionate sympathy and friendship.[64]

Inspite of Dickens' 'I cannot help', his word of affectionate sympathy and friendship is self-assured and assertive: 'all' and 'I know' have an unequivocal weight. What he claims to know about consolation has not made him doubt the power of his own words. Indeed, Dickens attributes the poverty and feebleness of consolation to the condition of grief itself, rather than to a shared sense of loss and of the loss of meaning which words have suffered. Dickens' 'this word' attempts to distinguish and distance himself and his words from all consolation. Whereas Spencer's 'how utterly vain are words' places the blame for this

vainness firmly on words themselves, the poise of Tennyson's phrase recognises the indissoluble relationship between words and the author of them: 'Vain' is a word which hovers over both.

Part of 'forgive them as all that one poor human sympathy can do', can be located in the last stanza of the Prologue of *In Memoriam*:

> Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
> Confusions of a wasted youth;
> Forgive them where they fail in truth,
> And in thy wisdom, make me wise.[66]

In both poem and letter, in private and public, Tennyson continues to state his concern that by using words at all, he has sinned. 'Forgive *them*' ('wild and wandering cries', 'vain words'), however, suggests that the words are not his. At the very same time though, in his letter the relationship between 'them' and 'one poor human sympathy' is bridged through the close correspondence between the words 'vain' and 'poor': the words are vain because the human sympathy is poor. 'Poor human sympathy' is not so much a description, as a claim for the generally pitiable condition of being human. Tennyson recognises that, in the words of Newman, 'he cannot frame a language for himself'. In the same way that the sympathy in his letter of condolence is both his and yet is not, because such sympathy is felt by every 'human', so the words of his letter belong not only to him but also to everyone and therefore, to the corrupt body of the English language. Tennyson takes responsibilty for his own poor human sympathy, and for where words of sympathy 'fail in truth', or are felt to be poor or vain or commonplace.

The other unwritten 'nothing' which sounds in Tennyson's question, 'what can one say..?', is contained in the commonplace 'nothing new'. The writer of a letter of condolence feels that he can say nothing new; as Barthes points out, 'alongside each and every utterance one might say that off-stage voices can be heard'.[66] That 'each and every' is, one might say, an off-stage voice itself, implies that even saying that there is nothing new to say is itself saying nothing new. In his letter of condolence to Sir John Simeon, dated 1 September 1860, Tennyson manages to renew this commonplace, by answering his own question, 'what can one say..?', which prefaced this letter, thus:

> There is nothing consolatory that I or anyone else can say which would not seem flat and stale to you under so sudden and great a sorrow. I dare only speak for myself and tell you that my heart aches for and with you in your lonely house.[67]

Tennyson's 'not seem flat and stale' is not exactly nothing new (or fresh), in so far as it has a faint parallel in Hamlet's 'How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world' (I. ii. 133-4). Since Hamlet's weariness comes from the fact that he is grieving, this is an appropriate off-stage voice, for it suggests that Tennyson is grieving too, and that a part of his grief is about the fact that all that can be said feels flat and stale. Although Tennyson recognises that his words cannot be entirely his own, he does not, like those who use the trope 'I cannot tell you how..', isolate himself. 'I or anyone else', together with the glance at Hamlet, creates a community and a theatre of feeling. It makes his inabilty to say nothing new a universal and human failing which is itself, nothing new. Tennyson thus evokes not only Simeon's other friends who are

offering their condolences alongside his own, but also all those who have attempted to condole in the past. At the same time, however, Tennyson is able to 'only speak for myself', by giving 'flat and stale' commonplaces freshness and importance.

Thus, the commonplace, 'my heart aches for you' is renewed, as it recalls Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* (which begins, 'My heart aches...'). Whereas Keats' heart does not ache for anyone else, Tennyson's heart not only 'aches for you', but also 'and with you'. Although 'for' implies that the sympathetic aching is felt at something of a distance, 'and with you' has the effect of lessening this, having the rhythm of compasionate giving. Tennyson's heart is placed alongside Simeon's, as if Tennyson is with him 'in your lonely house', which, as a result, might seem less lonely even though Tennyson is not actually present there, except in the form of words beating with fellow feeling. Moreover, 'your lonely house' gives a poignantly particular locality to the private and silent condition of Simeon's grief.

Tennyson attempts to make his 'word of comfort' more his own, by altering those commonplaces, or 'old hackneyed terms', which anyone can say.[68] Thus, in his phrase 'at such an hour' (from 'all that one poor human sympathy can do at such an hour'), Tennyson avoids the more general and commonplace view of 'the anguish of the first terrible grief', an example of which can be seen when, after the death of George Lewes, John Blackwood told Joseph Langford that 'At such a time she [George Eliot] may feel a relief in the sight of a friend'.[69] By writing 'hour' instead of 'time', Tennyson shows his individual awareness of, and sympathy

for, the acute pangs of grief experienced in the first stage of bereavement, when the sufferer first begins to be in need of comfort. This fact is actually incorporated into his 'at such an hour', since underlying it, is the commonplace 'in my hour of need'.

On 11 October 1833, Henry Hallam's friend, Charles Peers, wrote in his letter of condolence on the death of Arthur Hallam:

> In such trials as these to a dear friend, one feels that the attempt to point out any matter of consolation is hopeless.[70]

If this is so, then the bereaved can do nothing but bear the blow, or the physical shock of a bereavement, and although a condoler's words can do nothing to remove or even alleviate the pain, they can at least recognise that grief's 'thousand shocks that come and go' (CXIII) are painful. If there is nothing to be said, and no comfort to be given in such trials, then the bereaved can do nothing but bear the blow of the loss.

The expression 'the blow' is a commonplace when describing the physical response to the loss of a loved one. In his letter of condolence to Henry Hallam, Charles Peers bemoaned the fact that 'this terrible blow fell upon you!'.[71] In 1839, Dickens told William Bradbury that 'It is, no doubt, a heavy blow to lose so sweet a child.'[72] On 3 June 1875, Newman referred to the death of Ambrose St John as 'this sudden blow'.[73] In his letter of condolence to George Eliot (5 Dec. 1878), Benjamin Jowett wrote

Dear Mrs Lewes
I hardly know how either to write to you or not to write to you after the sad news which I read in this morning's paper. I am afraid that the blow must be to you an overwhelming one, and that for years you will feel the dreariness and isolation caused by it.[74]

In Tennyson's letter of condolence on the death of Edmund Lushington's sister, dated 26 July 1854, he writes:

Dearest Edmund
It is indeed very terrible news which your letter of this morning conveys. The loss of one who seemed almost —, as far as humanity can be, — perfection must needs tell upon you all. What can be said in such a case? What comfort suggested? The blow must be borne. It is some satisfaction at least in the midst of such grief to find you are not quite prostrated by it, but capable of writing.[75]

Both Jowett ('the sad news') and Tennyson ('very terrible news') describe the quality of their reaction to the news of these respective deaths, rather than attempting to describe the kind of blow felt by their respective correspondents. Whereas the other blows quoted above are 'terrible', 'heavy', 'sudden', and 'overwhelming', 'the blow' in both Jowett's and Tennyson's letter of condolence is without an adjective. In Tennyson's case, however, 'The blow must be borne' is said in the face of rhetorical questions heavy with the sense that there is nothing to be said. That the word 'nothing' is evoked but is not actually spelt out, means that the reticence of 'The blow must be borne' overcomes the implied defeat of the question, 'What can be said in such a case?'.

The monosyllables and heavy alliteration of Tennyson's 'The blow must be borne', mean that the full force of the blow feels undiminished throughout. Although Jowett's 'the blow must be to you an overwhelming one', recognises the solitary nature of bereavement, 'to *you*' tends to emphasise the distinction between the condoler and the bereaved. 'To you' also implies that 'the blow' is not something in which Jowett shares; whereas he is 'afraid', she 'will feel'. By contrast, because Tennyson's 'The blow must be borne' is without personal pronouns, it can apply both to the condoler, to the bereaved and to the deceased. It is thus an observation which does not have the 'dreariness' of Jowett's, for instead of confining Lushington's grief, it incorporates the living and the dead with a sense of timeless community: the blow has been and must be borne, at last, by all. Furthermore, Eliot is also potentially isolated by Jowett's 'blow' because it is one which he states will be felt by her 'for years'. Although Tennyson's 'The blow must be borne' does not shrink from the inevitability of feeling the blow, or from the possibility that the blow might have a long duration, at the same time, it does not sentence Lushington: 'The blow must be borne' carries with it a sense that at some time, it will have been borne.

Tennyson never had occasion to write a letter of condolence on the death of someone else's child. By contrast, half of Dickens' twenty-six letters of condolence are on the deaths of children.

CDLC, 1. 18 Nov. 1835: Macrone's son; one month.
CDLC, 3. 7 Mar. 1839: William Bradbury's daughter; age unknown.
CDLC, 4. 19 Dec. 1839: George Beadnell's son; thirty-two years.

CDLC, 5. 26 May 1841: Basil Hall's son; four years.
CDLC, 7. 24 Oct. 1841: George Hogarth's son; twenty years.
CDLC, 9. 31 Jan. 1849: Henry Burnett's son; three months.
CDLC, 10. 9 Mar. 1849: John Leech's daughter; one year and eight months.
CDLC, 12. 28 Feb. 1850: William Macready's daughter; age unknown.
CDLC, 13. 31 Jan. 1851: Mark Lemon's daughter; two years.
CDLC, 18. 26 Apr. 1855: Mark Lemon's son; three months.
CDLC, 19. 13 June 1855: Mrs Winter's daughter; one year and two weeks.
CDLC, 20. 5 June 1859: Mrs White's child; sex and age unknown.
CDLC, 26. 20 July 1869: William Macready's daughter; thirty-four years.[76]

That of these thirteen deaths, at least six are known to have occurred before the age of three, meant that Dickens was often faced with having to offer condolences on the particularly 'sharp... pain...of losing a child'. The death of those who had achieved a longer life meant that at least a condoler was able to draw on an accumulation of memories and impressions, developed over years, if not over a lifetime, When Dickens' great friend, the Honourable Richard Watson died, aged fifty-two, he provided Mrs Watson with consolation derived from a contemplation of the past:

> We held him so close to our hearts — all of us here — and have been so happy with him, and so used to say how good he was, and what a gentle, generous, noble spirit he had, and how he shone out among commoner men as something so real and genuine and full of every kind of worthiness that it has often brought tears into my eyes to talk of him — we have been so accustomed to do this, when we looked forward to years of unchanged intercourse, that now, when everything but Truth goes down into the dust, those recollections which make the sword so sharp pour balm into the wound. And if it be a consolation to us to know the virtues of his character, and the reasons that we had for loving him, O how much greater is your comfort who were so devoted to him and were the happiness of his life![77]

Dickens' consolation is a double edged sword, for, as he told

Macready after the death of his first wife: 'the recollection of great love and happiness associated with the dead, soothes while it wounds.'[78] Providing the bereaved with knowledge of the deceased's virtues and character can help to facilitate the work of grief, by helping to declare the loved object to be dead, and to organise complex memories into a whole. Dickens, however, maintains that Watson's qualities are a great source of comfort.

With the death of a baby, however, the memory would not have had time or occasion to collect such impressions. In such a context, Tennyson's questions, 'what can one say, what comfort can one give?', take on an added poignancy, for it would be difficult for a condoler to write easily and naturally about a character who had barely glimpsed the world, and had barely been glimpsed by the world. Dickens attempts to make such slight acquaintances a source of consolation, as in his letter of condolence to John Macrone (the publisher, to whom Dickens had sold *Sketches by Boz*), dated 18 November 1835. Macrone's one month old son had died:

> My dear Sir,
> I am much grieved to hear of your sudden bereavement. If consolation can be offered to a father under such circumstances, however, it may afford you some relief to reflect that you lost your poor little boy at at an age when death is an easy transit to a better World; and before years of solicitude and anxiety, and the recollection of the thousand holds upon your affection created in that time would have rendered the shock far harder to bear, and infinitely more difficult to forget.[79]

Although death might have been an 'easy transit' for Macrone's son, the implication of Dickens' phrasing is that this death was also made easier for the bereaved father. From this suggestion,

Dickens goes on to attempt to derive a source of consolation from the reflection that, since death is inevitable, it would have been harder if Macrone's son had died at a later date. By contemplating a hypothetical future shock, Dickens manages to pass over the present shock, and with it, the thought, raised but not developed by the phrase, 'poor little boy', that Macrone's son may already have had a 'thousand holds' upon his father's affections. The phrase, 'infinitely more difficult to forget', suggests that Macrone has already begun to forget, and so is a further attempt to move the bereaved Macrone on and away from the possibility that he might be faced with 'years of solictude and anxiety'.

Dickens also employs the same kind of consolation in his letter of condolence to John Leech (his friend and illustrator), after the death of his daughter at the age of one year and eight months:

> Try to think it better that the dear little child is spared from greater uneasiness and pain, and is at peace now, than it could or would have been if she had lived a few years longer – to take a stronger hold upon you and her mother every day – and to leave a mightier blank in your hearts.[80]

Again, Dickens attempts to reduce the strength of the hold that Leech's daughter might already have had upon her father, and also to diminish the present blank in the hearts of the bereaved, by contemplating how much greater Leech's uneasiness and pain would have been, if his daughter had died later.

In his letter of condolence to Mrs Winter (nee Beadnell) — in 1833, Dickens had courted her —, after the death of her baby daughter:

> The death of infants is a release from so much chance and change — from so many casualties and distresses — and is a thing so beautiful in its serenity and peace — that it should not be a bitterness, even in a mother's heart...
>
> ...she never was old, wan, tearful, withered. This is always one of the sources of consolation in the deaths of children. With no effort of the fancy, with nothing to undo, you will always be able to think of the pretty creature you have lost, *as a child* in Heaven.[81]

That a dead infant 'never was old, wan, tearful, withered' is not necessarily always one of the sources of consolation, for the very fact that 'she never was' these and many other things, could actually be one of the main sources of the bereaved's grief. The pain of regret and grief is not confined to the days that are no more: it can also be felt when thinking of those days that 'could or would have been' but never were. Dickens attempts to reverse the regret, and lessen the pain, of 'she never was', by citing only the loss of seemingly negative qualities. That 'she never was old, wan, tearful, withered', is a very determined counting of the deceased's and the bereaved's blessings. This is achieved by directing the attention away from another source of regret, what she was and had been, towards what she now is: 'a child in Heaven'. Dickens neither acknowledges the effort required to achieve and maintain this view, nor considers that the bereaved are likely, perhaps with no effort of the fancy, to think repeatedly of the pretty creature they have lost, and attempt to

'undo' the loss, in order to think of the pretty creature as they would have been as a child on Earth. That Dickens seeks to avoid the recognition of this pain, can be seen in the way that the particularity of Mrs Winter's loss, is subsumed into the universality of his phrase, 'the deaths of children', and, later in the letter, 'millions of mothers'.

In his letter of condolence to William Bradbury (one of Dickens' printers), after the death of his daughter, Dickens wrote:

> I venture to hope my dear Sir, that the day is not far distant when you will be able to think of this dear child with a softened regret which will have nothing of bitterness in its composition — when it will be a melancholy but not a painful satisfaction to call up old looks and thoughts and turns of speech [...][82]

Dickens, however, frequently does more than hope that such a softening is not far distant; rather, he sets out to bring it closer. Since death is inevitable, there is no profit in brooding. Instead of dwelling upon the initial bitterness of loss, Dickens' heartfelt wish is to 'soften the first sharp moments of bereavement',[83] to 'soften its first bitterness...and render it less hard to bear';[84] to help the bereaved 'bear it gently and with a softened sorrow'; the death of a child 'should not be a bitterness, even in a mother's heart'.[85] Dickens seeks to achieve such a softening by diverting the bereaved from present distresses, by contemplating what 'could or would have been' (in the case of Macrone and Leech), and of what 'never was' (in the case of Mrs Winter). In Dickens' letter of condolence to his

friend, Mary Boyle, after the death of her mother, aged seventy-eight (dated 10 October 1851), he seeks to soften, by denying the first bitterness of the blow:

> There is indeed nothing terrible in such a death — nothing that we would undo — nothing that we may remember otherwise than with deeply thankful, though with softened hearts.[66]

Rather than speaking of the blow of Mary Boyle's bereavement, Dickens attempts to counter it with the anaphora and climax of 'nothing...nothing ...nothing'. Thus, although 'nothing' is a word which is at the centre of 'the Abyss of grief', Dickens strives to make 'nothing' a source of triumphant consolation, rather than a reference to her loss or condition (the 'nothing' which is the blank or void of death and grief). Dickens' denial, 'There is indeed nothing terrible in such a death', is a complete inversion of Tennyson's 'It is indeed very terrible', in his letter of condolence to Edmund Lushington quoted above. Whereas Tennyson speaks of the terrible nature of loss without flinching, Dickens' repetition of 'nothing' attempts to undo, or at least soften, the full terrible blow of the words 'nothing' and 'terrible'.

In Dickens' letter of condolence to George Beadnell (the father of Maria with whom Dickens was in love in 1833), after the death of his thirty-two year old son, Arthur (19 Dec. 1839), Dickens tries to undo the blow of bereavement by focusing upon the nature of the bereaved's death.

> It is nothing that death is inevitable; but it is something

> that it has been without pain — how much more that it has been resigned and tranquil — that the object of our love and regret has passed away in peace, leaving nothing behind but pleasant thoughts of his worth and excellence, and his timely reliance on that Merciful Being who did not desert him in his hour of need.[87]

The nature of Dickens' condolences here, are made perplexing by the contradictions and ellipsis in the phrase 'It is nothing that death is inevitable'. This can be read as a determined facing of facts, along the lines of 'there is nothing consoling in saying the commonplace, death is inevitable'. Such a recognition of a general truth about bereavement and condolences, however, is contradicted by the phrase's denial. To say that the inevitability of death is 'nothing', is at odds with the whole experience of bereavement. Denial is a common component of grief: struggling to recognise the fact that a loved one has died, is an inevitable part of the work of mourning. Thus, Dickens' general maxim, 'death is inevitable', not only goes against the common responses to grief, it also breaks down in the particular instance of Arthur Beadnell's death. Dying in India at the age of thirty-two, might not necessarily create an immediate acceptance of the inevitability of death in those closest to the deceased. When, in April 1886, Tennyson's youngest son, Lionel, died in India at the age of thirty-two, Queen Victoria wrote in a letter of condolence to Tennyson that

> it is *terrible* to lose one's grown up children when one is no longer young oneself, and to see as you will do now, the sore stricken young widow of one's beloved son![88]

Dickens' general assertion — 'It is nothing that death is

inevitable' — avoids the '*terrible*' nature of death ('There is nothing terrible in such a death'), in general, and the death of a grown up child, in particular. Part of what is so 'terrible' about such a loss, is that it goes against an innate sense of natural justice (the fathers should die before the sons). Such a bereavement 'when one is no longer young oneself', therefore, is a ghastly reminder of the close and arbitrary nature of death: if the young die young, then what of those who are no longer young? Dickens does not make clear whether part of the inevitability of death is its arbitrariness. He avoids the possibility that if a sense of resignation about the loss of a grown up child is ever achieved, it is done so not through the imposition of others, but through the passing of time and the absorbing and painful work of mourning.

'It is nothing that death is inevitable' can also be read as an attempt to triumph over death: although it is of no consolation to say that death is inevitable, yet, since death is inevitable, there is 'something' consoling to be had from the nature of the death. The reminder that Arthur's death was inevitable and peaceful, is an attempt to calm the bereaved, by presenting the blow of death and loss as if it is 'without pain', and therefore, 'nothing'. Dickens' claim that Arthur Beadnell is 'leaving nothing behind but pleasant thoughts', denies the fact that in some senses the deceased do leave nothing behind (an empty form and 'a void where heart on heart reposed'). Again, the phrase, 'pleasant thoughts' avoids the unpleasant thoughts and feelings

which are part of the painful temper of grief in general, and the *'terrible'* blow of losing 'one's grown up children when one is no longer young oneself', in particular.

After the death of his son, Tennyson admitted that 'The thought of Lionel tears me to pieces — he was so full of promise & so young'.[89] Part of Tennyson's poem, *To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, is a contemplation of what the death of Lionel has left behind:

X

the Was, the Might-have-been,
And those lone rites I have not seen,
And one drear sound I have not heard,

XI

And dreams that scarce will let me be,
Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When That within the coffin fell,
Fell – and flashed into the Red Sea,

XII

Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars. To question, why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine! and I may meet him soon.[90]

Dickens tends to pass over such regrets and questions, or to turn 'the Was and the Might-have-been' into a source of consolation. In his attempts to make the nature of the death pleasant, and the bereaved resigned, he passes over the painful processes of mourning, in which the attachment to the loved object is only severed in a slow and repeatedly painful way. Dickens, therefore, also attempts to soften or undo the 'first sharp moments of

bereavement', by moving the bereaved on to a time when 'the first burst of anguish [is] over.'

Dickens' own strategy for dealing with the first burst of anguish can be seen when his ninth child, Dora Annie, died on 14 April 1851, at the age of eight months. The following day, Dickens wrote to the Duke of Devonshire, explaining that his

> card was presented at your house by Mr Lemon and not by myself, for a sad reason. I presided at a Public Dinner in the City yesterday; and on leaving the Chair was informed of the instantaneous death of my infant child. She had died in a moment, during the dinner, and my servant deferred telling me until I had finished my duty. We had called her Dora, in remembrance of my last story — it was an ill-omened name — I had had her in my arms just before I went out — and I have now to tell her mother that though she was quite gay then, she is only a remembrance.[91]

Dickens' 'last story' was *David Copperfield*. Out of all of Dickens's fifteen novels, *David Copperfield* is the one which, as Forster observed, would for ever be connected with the author's individual story. David Copperfield's unhappy time in the blacking factory is based on Dickens' own; Mr Micawber was modelled on Dickens' father, whilst Dora Spenlow was based upon Maria Beadnell, Dickens' first love, whom he had unsuccessfully courted from 1830 to 1833. As Dickens remarked, the novel is characterised by a 'very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction'.[92] When his ninth child, a daughter, was born on 16 August 1850, he called her Dora 'in remembrance of my last story'. By christening her thus, Dickens had given the name of a fictional character — the childlike Dora Spenlow — who was herself based

upon a real person — Maria Beadnell — to a real child — Dora Annie Dickens. Thus, the novel's very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction is extended into Dickens' life.

Giving the name of a fictional character to a real child allowed Dickens to give flesh to the commonplace idea that a creative work is the child of the artist's Fancy. On 23 August 1850, a week after the birth of Dora Annie, and eight days before the publication of number XVI of *David Copperfield*, Dickens wrote to Miss Burdett Coutts, telling her that

> I am at Broadstairs with my various children — real and imaginary[93]

By 'children', Dickens means his real flesh and blood children, the imaginary characters in his novel, and the novel itself, which he regarded as his 'pen-ink-and paper Child'.[94] His playing with these different kinds of 'children' was an idea of which he regularly conceived and enjoyed. For example, two days before its publication, Dickens called the first number of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 'this new baby'.[95] With less than a fortnight until *Chuzzlewit*'s Number XIII, he expressed his concern that although there was 'a new babby in the house' (his fifth child, Frances Jeffrey), his next Number was as yet, 'unborn and unbegotten'.[96] Dickens continued to blur the distinctions between the children of his Fancy and of his flesh and blood, by presenting the effort required to deliver an instalment of the former, with the effort involved in giving birth to the latter. As he began work on *David*

Copperfield and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens announced that he was in the first 'agonies of a new book'.[97] He often had 'to take great pains' in the working out of his ideas. The exertion required to finish the work often left him feeling exhausted. The writing of Number XIV of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for example, 'rendered [him]...quite prostrate'[98]; once he had finished *Hard Times*, Dickens observed that he found himself '"used up"'.[99]

There is more than a playful aspect to this interweaving. Dickens attempts to make the pains of creation comic, in an attempt to diminish its seriousness and to regain control. Dickens' writing took possession of him. When 'in the usual wretchedness' of settling himself to the writing of *Little Dorrit*, of which the characteristic was 'unsettlement', there is often the feeling that his imprisonment in the story and his struggle to take charge of it, might actually kill him.[100] On 8 May 1855, he began a letter to Miss Coutts with the news that he was 'in a state of restlessness impossible to be described — impossible to be imagined — wearing and tearing to be experienced'.[101] Two days later, on 10 May, his letter to her ends with the following:

> — Restlessness worse and worse. Dont [*sic*] at all know what to do with myself. Wish I had a balloon.[102]

Most of Dickens' letters to his friend, the philanthropist, Miss Burdett Coutts, are concerned with her charitable works; indeed, his letter of 8 May, recommends 'two old ladies' in need of financial assistance. Now it is Dickens who seems to be in need of her charity. Although his agitation is real and seems to be

getting the better of him, Dickens deflates the seriousness of the situation with the inflation of his child-like wish for a balloon. He thus seeks to regain control of his condition, by making light of the idea that he is engaged in a real life and death struggle. At the same time, however, a balloon is rather a despairing means of escape, for a balloon would only present him with a variation of the condition he finds himself in already. In a balloon, he would still be unable to take full command but would be blown by every wind. That he sees a balloon as a means of escape from the labyrinthine world of *Little Dorrit*, makes Dickens something of a Daedalus: his restlessness is that of an architect imprisoned by his own design. As he told Wilkie Collins on 11 May, 'a Balloon...might be inflated in the Garden in front — but I am afraid of its scarcely clearing those little houses'.[103]

Once the work was properly under way, it took possession of him; as he told Miss Coutts, his writing of Number III of *Little Dorrit*, 'will hold me prisoner'.[104] This feeling was not just derived from the fact that this portion of the novel is set in the Marshalsea prison. On 20 October 1846, Dickens wrote to Forster from Geneva:

> I dreamed all last week that the *Battle of Life* was a series of chambers impossible to be got to rights or got out of, through which I wandered drearily all night. On Saturday night I don't think I slept an hour. I was perpetually roaming through the story, and endeavouring to dove-tail the revolution into the plot. The mental distress, quite horrible.[105]

This distress is a particularly vivid realisation of Dr Johnson's thoughts on the pains of composition, in which often 'the mind

falls at once into a labyrinth, of which neither the beginning nor end can be discovered'.[106] Not only did Dickens' disjointed form of publication of his novels in monthly and weekly instalments, leave him in a 'disjointed state',[108] but he also often experienced and was overcome by the central idea of the book he was engaged upon. As he told Miss Coutts, with regard to Number X, 'I am now again shut up in *Bleak House*'.[109]

One of Dickens' great talents was his capacity to make the imaginary seem real. R. W. Buss' painting, *Dickens' Dream* (c. 1872, unfinished) represents this ability to image forth characters and events. In the painting, Dickens sits pensively in his study, whilst all around him, scenes from his novels, hover in the air. Forster remarked that for Dickens, 'crowds of external images [were] always rising so vividly before him.'[110] Dickens himself commented on his writing: 'I don't invent it — really do not — *but see it*, and write it down'.[111] He told Forster that he had 'imaged forth a good deal of *Barnaby* [*Rudge*] by keeping my mind steadily upon him'.[112] The character of Jenny Wren in *Our Mutual Friend*, 'and all belonging to it...[had suddenly come] flashing up in the most cheerful manner and I only had to look on and leisurely describe it'.[113].

As soon as he had become 'steeped in my story', however, Dickens often felt unable to escape or separate himself from his creations.[114] When working on Number I of *Dombey and Son* in Lausanne, Dickens complained to Forster, about

> the absence of any accessible streets. I should not walk in

them in the day time, if they were here, I dare say: but at night I want them beyond description. I don't seem able to get rid of my spectres unless I can lose them in crowds.'[115]

Although he recognised that his creations are essentially insubstantial ('spectres'), he continued to be haunted by their peculiar reality: their ghostly life persisted beyond the moment of their description. Although events and characters began as 'faint shadows...in my head',[116] and became 'spectres' after a hard day's work, when he gave birth to them at the time of writing, it was as if they were alive. There is palpable evidence of this in Dickens' letter to Forster, about the completion of *The Chimes*:

I have undergone as much sorrow and agitation as if the thing were real.'[117]

As he admitted, when he was 'very hard at work finishing a long story [in this case *Little Dorrit*]...wildnesses come over me and I go off unexpectedly into strange places'.[118] His struggle to regain possession of himself, and also of his material, ~~and of himself,~~ accounts for a large part of his feelings of 'grim despair and restlessness'.[119] He was made a prisoner and was held in thrall by his creations and by the agonies involved in beginning and finishing a book. His attempt to regain control — to get out of, or sufficiently far away from a story — is marked by a degree of self-parody, with the result that there is an interweaving of the serious and the comic. After writing *The Chimes*, for instance, he told Forster that he felt 'shaky from work', and

I was obliged to lock myself in when I finished it yesterday,

> for my face was swollen for the time to twice its proper size, and was hugely ridiculous.[120]

The serious physical toll which resulted from his exertions on *The Chimes*, lessened by his giving them a ridiculous countenance. William Edrupt, 'Dickens' office-boy', recalled that the physical effects were, like his mental distress, 'quite horrible':

> Sometimes he would scarcely eat or sleep when beginning a new book [...and] sometimes after Mr. Dickens had written for hours I would get him a bucket of cold water, and he would put his head into it, and sometimes his hands.[121]

Towards the end of a book also, Dickens has to struggle to separate and free himself from the grip of his own creations, which had a life of their own. Often, it is as if this fight for supremacy is a real life and death conflict. And once again, one of the ways Dickens sought to regain control of this interweaving of the real and the imaginary, was to interweave the serious and the comic. For example, referring to Number III of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens wrote to H. Smale:

> I shall not have the pleasure of coming to dine with you until my February work has had its throat cut: which laudable deed I shall perform with all convenient dispatch.[122]

With regard to Number III of *Dombey and Son*, he told Forster that

> The ink stand is to be cleaned out to-night, and refilled, preparatory to execution. I trust that I may shed a good deal of ink in the next fortnight.[123]

And Miss Coutts is informed that

> The Haunted Man says he thinks he will want a little fresh air shortly. I think of taking him down to Brighton next week for ten days or so, and putting an end to him.[124]

In these examples, Dickens plays upon the commonplace, 'finishing off'. Having given birth to the characters and events of his story, his finishing them off, is presented as if it were a murder. In fact, the agonies which he experienced when attempting to begin a new book, may also be seen in this way. 'At such times,' he told Leigh Hunt when beginning *Little Dorrit*, 'I am as infirm of purpose as Macbeth'.[125] His 'state of restlessness' then, can be seen not only as birth pangs, but as an attempt to screw his courage to the sticking-place. His 'restless condition' is similar to the wildness of Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*. Instead of giving himself up to his creations, which sometimes, as in his idea for *Hard Times*, 'laid hold of me by the throat in a very violent manner',[126] Dickens attempts to reverse the situation. It is as if he has to finish off his characters, some of whom, like Headstone, were murderers, before they finished him off.

This interweaving is further complicated when on 21 August 1850 — less than a week after the birth of Dora Annie and just over a week before the publication of number XVII of *David Copperfield* — Dickens, then at Broadstairs, dispatched a letter to his wife:

> I have still Dora to kill —— I mean the Copperfield Dora — and cannot make certain how long it will take to do. But if I could make it before dinner tomorrow, I should come up by the Express train.[127]

Presenting himself as a rather insouciant murderer whose appetite will not be spoilt by his work, and who is able to make good his

escape by the Express (rather than in a Balloon), is another means of lessening and also distancing himself from his feelings of loss at having finished the novel.

Four days after the publication of the final number of his previous novel, *Dombey and Son*, he had told the Countess of Blessington that 'in the strangeness of my separation from all those people, I am quite forlorn'.[128] Although 'those people' were imaginary rather than real people, for Dickens they appeared and felt as though they were real.) The strangeness of his separation from them, then, is that although their deaths were not real, yet Dickens felt as though they were; although those people no longer lived in Dickens' imagination, yet they continued to have an existence in the pages of his novels and in the imaginations of his readers. Since Dickens felt his characters were real, and he also had a tendency to merge himself with, or to be taken over by them, when he was putting an end to them, he felt that he was in some sense putting an end to himself. There is a further strangeness, then, in that he was responsible for these losses: his finishing off a character or a book, was a form of self-murder. Writing to Forster on 21 October 1850, when he was 'in three pages of the shore' of *David Copperfield*, Dickens observed that 'I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World'.[129] In the Preface to the 1850 edition, he wrote:

> It would concern the reader little, perhaps to know, how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two-years' imaginative task; or how an Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him for ever.[130]

Finishing off this novel then, left Dickens feeling bereaved: it was a self-inflicted blow. The laying down of the pen asserts the fact that it is an Author who wields the power of life and death. By calling his eighth child Dora 'in remembrance of my last story', Dickens is able to maintain a link with the child of his Fancy, which goes some way to temper his 'regret in the separation from many companions'. Dickens attempts to maintain this appearance of control when the real Dora died. Over a year after her death, Dickens wrote to Lewis Gaylord Clark:

> "We are seven" —— and two over. Have been three over, but a real little Dora closely followed her imaginary namesake to the Land of the Shadows.[131]

Dickens thought that Wordsworth's *We Are Seven* 'was one of the most striking examples of his genius'.[132] His reference to it seems appropriate, in so far as it is one of Wordsworth's *Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood*. In *We Are Seven*, the 'little cottage girl' continues to 'have her will', insisting that her sister and brother are still to be counted as part of the family, even though she is told that they are 'in the church-yard laid', and that 'Their spirits are in heaven'. She asserts, rather like the last line of Tennyson's poem *Vastness*, that 'the dead are not dead but alive'.[133] She feels that she plays and communicates with them, and as a result, they seem to have more of a particular and real presence for her than the two 'who are gone to sea'. Unlike the child's dead brother and sister, Dickens' 'two' are in fact, living. Although he recognises that the third is 'over', in the sense that she has gone, he gives her death a

fictional aspect by associating it with Wordsworth's fiction and by making it inseparable from the end of Dora Spenlow and his feelings which surrounded his having finished *David Copperfield*.

The complexities and contradictions of such a reference suggest that Dickens is not altogether in control of his interweaving of 'my various children — real and imaginary'. Although both pass into 'the Land of the Shadows', it was Dickens who dismissed the imaginary Dora, along with the other children of Dickens' Fancy, into a 'shadowy world'. The death of the real Dora was beyond his control: 'she had died in a moment'. It is Dickens' continued attempts to affect a 'very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction', which helped to shape and take command of the death of Dora Dickens. On the morning of 15 April 1851, he wrote to his wife, who was then staying at Malvern:

> Little Dora, without being in the least pain, is suddenly stricken ill. She awoke out of a sleep, and was seen, in one moment, to be very ill. Mind! I will not deceive you. I think her *very* ill.
>
> There is nothing in her appearance but perfect rest. You would suppose her quietly asleep. But I am sure she is very ill, and I cannot encourage myself with much hope of recovery. I do not — why should I say I do, to you my dear! — I do not think her recovery at all likely.[134]

This letter is an attempt to deceive. As Catherine wrote on the envelope, this letter was actually 'written on the day after our little Dora's death'.[135] Dickens maintained that his purpose in creating this little fiction had been to bring 'Catherine to town on a pretence', in order to make 'the shock as gradual as we could'.[136] In effect, he had kept the 'sad news' from his wife in the same way that Forster had kept it from him, until Dickens had

finished off presiding at the dinner he had left Dora to attend. This 'bringing to town' was more than just a means of bringing Catherine by degrees, to a realisation of the truth. It was also a way of reshaping and controlling events. Although 'she had died in a moment', the 'pretence of her being hopelessly ill', delays her death. Dickens has extended, and temporarily halted this moment by interposing a period of his own creation between his having Dora 'in my arms just before I went out', and her 'instantaneous death' immediately afterwards.

As well as delaying the shock, such a 'pretence' also acted as a distraction. On 20 April, Dickens told W. H. Wills of his plan to take 'Mrs Dickens out, under a variety of pretences'.[137] Dickens was soon engaged upon a variety of pretences himself: he was 'constantly occupied...to the utmost limits of my spare time in working at Bulwer's play'. [138] It is ironic that this play was entitled, *Not So Bad As We Seem*, for in his letters immediately after Dora's death, Dickens expressed more concern about the nervous condition of his wife than he did about himself, as if she had become the focus for his own grief. On 17 April, the day of Dora's funeral at Highgate Cemetery, Dickens told F. M. Evans that 'Mrs Dickens is as well as I could hope'.[139] The next day, writing to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, he used the same phrase, adding that 'she is quite resigned to what has happened and can speak of it tranquilly.' [140] As he did 'not yet know what the effect of such a shock' might be, he was 'anxious to direct her attention to our removal [from Devonshire Terrace to Tavistock House], and to keep it engaged', in much the same way as he had

directed his own attention to the production of Bulwer Lytton's play.[141] By 19 April, he informed Mrs Henry Austin that 'she [Mrs Dickens] is far from well';[142] and to Thomas Beard he disclosed the fact that 'Kate is very low'. [143] By contrast, on the same day (19 April) Dickens told Thomas Mitton that 'I am quite myself again, but I have undergone a good deal.'[144] This is the only explicit remark to be found in his letters about his nervous state, and it leaves a good deal unrevealed. For instance, Dickens' oldest daughter, Mamie, later recalled how her father

> did not break down until an evening or two after her death, [when] some beautiful flowers were sent...[He] was about to take them up-stairs and place them on the little dead baby, when he suddenly gave way completely.[145]

Dickens was also concerned that others should not give way. In his letter to his wife, dated 15 April, Dickens put 'the strongest entreaty and injunction upon you to come home with perfect composure'.[146] He wanted to be as in control of his life and his family as he felt he was in control of his own creations. Dickens took control of the funeral arrangements with perfect composure. On 15 April, he wrote to his brother-in-law, Henry Austin:

> My Dear Henry
>
> Word was brought to me last night, as I rose out of the chair at the Fund Dinner, that our poor little Dora had died in a moment —— I had been nursing her, before I went out.
>
> I want your advice. I wish to buy a piece of ground where we may lay the child, and be laid ourselves one day. What shall I do? Would it be expedient to buy it in a cemetery, or to wait to purchase under better auspices —— such as the Bill opens out? In the latter case would you advise me to lay the little coffin in a catacomb? — *could* I do it? — for the meantime? I will do what you would do yourself in such a case.
>
> Ever affectionately[147]

Word of Dora's death is brought to Austin in a straightforward manner. The tenderness of 'our poor little Dora had died in a moment', which looks as though it might well up into tears, is restrained by the dash which follows it. It is in this punctuation mark that the 'good deal' which Dickens had undergone, silently takes place. Rather than elaborating upon these details which, in any case, cannot be altered, Dickens moves on to concern himself with what he could control. Just over a fortnight before, after his father had died on the morning of 31 March 1851, Dickens had written to Forster, telling him, 'I hardly know what to do. I am going up to Highgate [Cemetery] to get the ground'.[148] Concentrating on the removal and the burial of Dora's body, served — as did Dickens' attempt to involve Kate in their removal to a new house — to 'direct...[the] attention...and to keep it engaged'. That Dickens hardly knows what to do with 'the little coffin', corresponds with the fact that he hardly knows what to do with himself, but wishes to control himself by being active.

He begins by asking the advice of Austin, the Secretary for the General Board of Health, rather than of Austin, the friend and brother-in-law. Reference is made to a specific detail of Austin's work, the Interment Bill (passed July 1850), under which the Board of Health were given the right to acquire new cemeteries. The tender reference to 'the little coffin' rests uneasily with his business-like, and legalistic choice of words, such as 'expedient...purchase...auspices...in the latter case'. In comparison with his earlier reference to 'the child', 'the little coffin' brings Dickens much closer to the hard reality of

the case (not least, the literal case in which she is to be laid). His 'would you advise me to lay the little coffin', together with '*could* I do it?', makes it sound as though Dickens is contemplating to undertake the actual laying of the coffin himself.

His second letter written on 15 April relates the news of Dora's death to the Duke of Devonshire, in order to ask leave to delay a performance of Bulwer's play which had been requested by Queen Victoria. Although he states that he felt it necessary to take 'a few days' rest from the toils of the Play', the second half of his letter is entirely concerned with taking control of the details of its arrangements.'[149] He asks the Duke if he would 'advertize the new day' without delay, and also to request that the Stage be 'erected next Tuesday', so that they could rehearse 'on it the next day and pretty regularly afterwards.'[150] Moreover, in a brief letter to Mark Lemon, written later that day, Dickens returns to these plans, fearing 'that in my confusion I have proposed to put the play off, too long'.[151]

Thus, the four surviving letters written by Dickens on the day after Dora's death, are more concerned with forthcoming business of one kind and another than they are with the preceding events. He is the Dutiful Husband preparing to break sad news to his wife, the Bereaved Father about to buy a grave, and the Theatre Producer, in charge of a company. Such a 'variety of pretences' meant that he would be 'constantly occupied...to the utmost limits of my spare time', and as a result, would have little or no time

to spare to brood on his 'domestic sorrow'. Such determination is entirely consonant with his view, as expressed to a Miss Emmely Gotschalk, a lady unknown to Dickens, who had written to him, telling of her gloom. On 1 February 1850, Dickens replied that it is neither 'wholesome...natural', nor the purpose of the mind to be involved in 'morbid occupation...and sad meditation'.[152] The 'remedy' for such a state of mind

> is easy, and we have it at hand — action, usefulness — and the determination to be of service, even in little things, to those about you, and to be doing something.[153]

Writing to her again on 23 December 1850, Dickens observed that

> If we all sat down to brood on Death, this scene of Duty would become a dismal place — no Duty would be done — mankind would soon sink into ignorance and misery — and Death would find us with a poor account to render, of our work. I apprehend it is because we are placed here to work...that it is so natural to us to dismiss the contemplation of that end that must come in the fulness of God's time. Our business is to use Life well. If we do that, we may let Death alone.
>
> Action, in an earnest spirit, is the refuge of Gloomy thoughts.[154]

In Chapter XII of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Miss Squeers offers Miss Price 'condolences...calculated to raise her friend's spirits and promote her cheerfulness of mind.'[155] Dickens, in his letters of condolence, has a similar stand-up determination to rouse the bereaved back to the business of life. In a letter of condolence to Charles Lever ('on Mrs Lever's grief'), Dickens wrote that 'in this hard life we must close up the ranks, whoever falls, and march on'.[156] Lever is brought to attention by Dickens' command, 'Cheer up — and cheer her [Mrs Lever] up — for God's sake'.[157] By presenting condolences which direct the attention away from the

first burst of anguish and which assume that the bitterness of grief has already softened to a sense of regret which is resigned and tranquil, Dickens seeks to raise the spirits of the bereaved. Such a strategy is a remedy for morbid occupation and sad meditation, for it involves the bereaved both in the activity of controlling grief and also in Dickens' own activities of denying that the 'nothing' of loss is something, while at the same time attempting to make 'something' out of the 'nothing' of loss.

VII

MANY BLESSED SOURCES OF CONSOLATION

> I have often found much more consolation in an entire conviction of ignorance, & inability to gain present knowledge, than I could have done from any opinions partially understood, or believed,
>
> Lord Holland to Henry Hallam[1]

Another strategy by which Dickens tries to move the bereaved on to a time when the first burst of anguish is over, is to attempt to divert the attention of the bereaved away from the death-bed and the grave, towards a contemplation of 'a better World',[1a] 'a bright and happy world...[a] blessed region of peace and rest',[2] an 'enduring world'.[3]

In Dickens' letter of condolence to William Bradbury, dated 3 March 1839, he provides 'considerations', which are intended 'to fortify the mind against such a loss [as the death of Bradbury's daughter]'.[4] Dickens goes on to present his own method of fortification, which he had undertaken after the death of his seventeen year old sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, on 7 May 1837:

> The first burst of anguish over, I have never thought of her with pain — never, I have never connected her idea with the grave in which she lies. I look upon it as I sometimes do upon the clothes she used to wear. They will moulder away in their secret places, as her earthly form will in the ground, but I have long since learnt to separate her from all this litter of dust and ashes, and to picture her to myself with every well-remembered grace and beauty heightened by the light of heaven and the power of that Merciful Being who would never try our earthly affections so severely but to make their objects happy, and to lead our thoughts to follow them.[5]

Dickens' insistence ('never...— never...never') is as much an attempt to convince himself of the need for such denials, as it is an attempt to convince Bradbury. The repetition of his denial in 'I have never thought of her with pain — never', can be read as a renewal of his resolve to keep his mind fortified against the pain that was originally connected with such a loss. Dickens retains control of himself, and to a certain extent, in control of Hogarth's death. That he has 'learnt to separate' her idea from her earthly form, is a kind of re-enactment of her death. That he can 'separate her from all this litter of dust and ashes', is an act of imaginative reclamation, with a disturbingly physical aspect. It is an act, moreover, which is akin to the powers that are associated with a 'Merciful Being', that is, the separation of the soul from the body and its continued life in Eternity.

What remains of Mary Hogarth in his imagination, are those qualities ('grace and beauty') which gave her earthly form life (in a similar way that her earthly form gave her clothes a kind of life). Dickens' memory does not just treasure what she was in life; her qualities are heightened by what and how he remembers. Dickens does not recall specific instances, but enhances 'her idea...with every well-remembered grace and beauty'. These are 'well-remembered' not only because they are clear or distinct, but also because they are appropriately brought to mind (he has never and will never think of her with pain). What seems to be a universal treasuring, therefore, is also the result of a process of selection.

There is a further kind of apotheosis of Mary Hogarth's qualities, as Dickens feels that the mental light in which he pictures them, is 'heightened by the light of heaven and by the power of that Merciful Being'. Picturing, or sensing this power, means that the severe trial of the affections is given a usefulness and purpose. The trial of the affections of the bereaved results in the happiness of those who are the object of such affections, and leads the 'thoughts to follow them'. Dickens' thoughts about Mary Hogarth have indeed led heavenwards. He sees the continued existence of her angelic qualities in his thoughts, imagination and memory, as having a direct corrrespondence with their continued existence in heaven. For Mary Hogarth's epitaph on her tomb at Kensal Green Cemetery, Dickens wrote 'Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen'.[6] By 1842, Dickens speaks of her as 'my better Angel'.[7]

Dickens' strategy of picturing Hogarth in the light of Heaven, is generally applied. The bereaved William Bradbury is told that those that were 'young and untried creatures (half Angels here) *must* be called away by God.'[8] When John Leech's daughter died, Dickens writes, 'try to remember...that she is among his angels evermore'.[9] When one of Mary Hogarth's brothers (George) died in October 1841, Mrs Hogarth is told

> to try — do try — to think that while you live on earth, there are Creatures among the Angels [George and Mary Hogarth], who owed their being to you.'[10]

Dickens makes these recommendations from his personal experience of having been comforted and fortified by his remembering and thinking of Mary Hogarth as an angel. Whereas the need to 'try to remember' suggests that in the first burst of grief, John Leech may have forgotten what he once knew about angels, 'try — do try — to think' is an injunction and a tender entreaty which suggests that Mrs Hogarth does not have this sense, but should make the effort to achieve it. His need to try and control what happens to the idea of those who were the object of earthly affections, by assuming powers, is seen in the phrase, 'owed their being to you', in his letter of condolence to Mrs Hogarth. Although, humanly speaking, Mrs Hogarth's son and daughter owed their being human to their mother — and if they had not been human, they would not be able to become Angels — yet, it is not in Mrs Hogarth's power to make them Angels: they owe this kind of being to a 'Merciful Being'. There is further evidence that Dickens' belief is not entirely clear, in the phrase, 'while you live on earth there are Creatures among the Angels', which implies that when Mrs Hogarth does not live on earth, those Creatures will not owe their being to her.

While Mrs Hogarth lives on earth, those Creatures have a continued sense of responsibility and care ('owe') for her. In his letter of condolence to George Beadnell (after the death of his son), Dickens explains why such an idea might be supposed:

> **Remember, my dear Sir, that the barrier which divides you now, is nothing to the gulf which has been between you ever since his boyhood. It is impossible to separate the idea of the dead from the companionship of the living. His thoughts were with you in life, but in that state which succeeds to**

death — in that happy state in which he surely is at this moment — to whom can his spirit cleave so strongly as to his mother and father? If in the living, the affections survive beyond the grave, it is but reasonable to hold that they survive with the dead. The Great Father who requires that His children should love Him, requires also that they should love their earthly parents; and when no fragment of our bodies perishes without producing something beautiful in its stead, it would be impious indeed to believe that a child's love and duty were buried in the grave, and that from their ashes nothing sprung again."

Having attempted to make nothing of death, by saying, earlier in this letter that 'It is nothing that death is inevitable', Dickens now attempts to make nothing of the final physical separation which death has wrought between Beadnell and his son. 'The gulf' of age, and then, physical distance (Beadnell's son served in India), which divided them in life, is made to lose its extent and depth. In death, it is only a 'barrier' (a fence or material obstruction' which prevents access). When Arthur Hallam died, Gladstone felt that 'all was swept into the gulf with...a fearful rapidity.' Dickens then, has made a word usually associated with death, and with associations with the 'Abyss of grief', apply to life. His observation about how in life, the 'gulf' between Beadnell and his son was tempered by the fact that 'his thoughts were with you', is used as a means of creating a sense of continuity.

Although Dickens' rhetorical questions put forward suppositions, they also maintain the line of his reasoning. As 'the Great Father requires that His children love him', so Dickens' 'It is but reasonable', requires Beadnell to adopt Dickens' 'heartfelt' and seemingly reasonable proposals. 'Requires' suggests both a

request and also a demand. Dickens' references to that happy state which succeeds death, and to the way that affections survive and maintain an efficacy beyond the grave, are both well-meaning entreaties: both demand that Beadnell should be convinced, and thus be reconciled, to his loss.

Dickens' assertions — 'no fragment of our bodies perishes without producing something beautiful in its stead', and 'it would be impious indeed to believe that a child's love and duty were buried in the grave, and that from their ashes nothing sprung again' — find a way into his fiction. After the burial of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, there is the following authorial comment:

> Oh! it is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty, universal Truth. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven.[12]

R. H. Horne, in his *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844), notices 'that the description of Little Nell's death, if divided off into lines, will form that species of gracefully irregular blank verse which Shelley and Southey often used'.[13] He gives the following specimen:

> When Death strikes down the innocent and young,
> For every fragile form from which he lets
> The panting spirit free,
> A hundred virtues rise,
> In shape [*sic*] of mercy, charity, and love,

To walk the world, and bless it.
Of every tear
That sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves,
Some good is born, some gentler nature comes.

It was as a result of this observation that (as has been seen in Chapter V), Dickens was made aware of 'the tendency to blank verse [...] when I am very much in earnest'.[14] Dickens had written the death of Little Nell in earnest, in the sense of it fulfilling a serious intention. As he told Forster, '[in] this ending of the tale, I resolved to try and do something which might be read by people about whom Death had been, — with a softened feeling, and with consolation.'[15]

The mood in which Dickens wrote the death of Nell was also very much in earnest, in the sense of that which is gravely impassioned. On 7 January 1841, ten days before the last number of *The Old Curiosity Shop* was to be published, Dickens told Forster, that in the contemplation of the writing of it,

> I am the wretchedest of the wretched. It casts the most horrible shadow upon me, and it is as much as I can do to keep moving at all. I tremble to approach the place a great deal more than Kit [...] Old wounds bleed afresh when I only think of the way of doing it: what the actual way of doing it will be, God knows. [...] Dear Mary died yesterday when I think of this sad story. I don't know what to say about dining tomorrow [...] I have refused several invitations for this week and next, determining to go nowhere till I had done. I am afraid of disturbing the state I have been trying to get into, and having to fetch it all back again.[16]

Dickens' purpose and method of writing the death of Little Nell, together with the two senses of 'earnest' — serious intention and gravely impassioned — provide a context for how Dickens' letters

of condolence might be read. In his condolences, as in his writing of the death of Little Nell, Dickens makes a resolution 'to try and do something'. Dickens' earnestness derives from his determination to be of service to the bereaved, by presenting, as he does in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 'the lesson that such deaths will teach'. His didactic purpose is a moral endeavour; his letters of condolence are good works, which have a correspondence with his other charitable philanthropic acts, such as his involvement in the founding of The Hospital for Sick Children in Great Ormond Street. Dickens has no doubt about his ability to be useful. After the death of Mary Hogarth, he had 'learnt to separate her from all this litter of dust and ashes'. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the lesson that such deaths will teach [...is] a mighty, universal Truth'. Dickens' confidence in the validity and verity of these personal perceptions, does not allow for doubts. Unlike Tennyson, who felt that 'it is very little that words can do', Dickens is certain both about his ability to condole and also about the bereaved's capacity to be condoled by what he writes. The intensity of his grief for Mary Hogarth, and his strategy for dealing with it, means that he feels amply qualified to sympathise. As he told his friend, W. Harrison Ainsworth, in a letter of condolence dated 7 March 1838:

> My Dear Friend
> I am truly grieved to hear of the affliction which has befallen you [the death of Ainsworth's wife], and know from sad experience how to sympathize with your sorrows.'[7]

What appear to be merely conventional openings — 'truly grieved', 'deeply sorry', 'I condole with you, from my heart' —

go on to become fully developed and gravely impassioned expressions. Dickens' letters of condolence are marked by their length, and by the length of their sentences (one sentence in Dickens' letter of condolence to William Bradbury is 142 words long [another 102 words, another 80 words]). That Dickens goes to such lengths, implies that he has, and he does in the composition of his fiction, 'become so excited with my subject that I cannot leave off'. Dickens employs a rhythm of momentum, which sometimes results in a fall into blank verse, in order to convey the depth and sincerity of his feeling.

When John Leech's daughter died, at the age of one year and eight months, Dickens declares that he is 'full of sympathy and interest and affection'.[18] After the death of George Beadnell's son, Dickens is 'full of heartfelt wishes for your peace'.[19] Aldous Huxley felt that such plenitude marked a cloying sentimentality, in which heart and brain were separated. In Huxley's *Vulgarity in Literature* (1930), he maintains that Dickens' full heart damaged his art:

> One of Dickens' most striking peculiarities is that, whenever in his writing he becomes emotional, he ceases instantly to use his intelligence. The overflowing of his heart drowns his head and even dims his eyes; for whenever he is in the melting mood, Dickens ceases to be able and probably ceases even to wish to see reality. His one and only desire is just to overflow, nothing else. Which he does, with a vengeance and an atrocious blank verse that is meant to be poetical prose [...] Mentally drowned and blinded by the sticky overflowings of his heart, Dickens was incapable, when moved, of re-creating, in terms of art, the reality which had moved him.[20]

Aldous Huxley, whose brother, Julian, was a biologist, had intended to read biology at Oxford, but, curiously, because of an

eye disease, he read English. His criticism of the death of Little Nell does have a scientific aspect, in his dislike of excessive emotion, and in his observation of the way that Dickens could no longer 'see reality'. His conclusion is blinded by the sensibilities of his age, in much the same way that he claims Dickens' writing was blinded by the sensibilities of his. It is not Dickens' 'one and only desire...to overflow'. As has been seen, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Dickens had an earnest didactic purpose, as he has in his letters of condolence, to try and do something. Dickens' overflowing of the heart is more than just a self-indulgence; it derives from a determination to be of service, that is, to be philanthrophic in both public (in the novel) and private (in his letters of condolence).

Huxley's 'overflowing' and 'drowns' evoke the waves of discomfort, or the pangs of grief, which often means that the surface of expressed words is not always intimate with 'the thoughts that arise in me', or with the depths of grief within. Huxley, however, will not concede that in the reality of death and bereavement, there is this dislocation between emotion and intelligence. His dislike of the way in which Dickens 'dims his eyes', discounts the way in which thinking or writing or speaking of the one who has died, can bring on a flood of tears. As Basil Hall admitted after the death of his son, 'I am in such real distress in consequence of this loss, that I feel weakened in powers of expression & description —'.[21]

Forster attributed the main cause of the 'extraordinary success' of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (sales reached 100,000 copies) to 'the pathetic vein it had opened'.[22] After reading the last chapters, William Macready wrote in his diary that

> I have never read printed words that gave me so much pain. I could not weep for some time...I cannot criticize it.[23]

Macready, the leading tragic actor of his day, famous in particular for his impersonation of King Lear, responded, as did many of his contemporaries, on an emotional level. In so far as the death of Little Nell provoked tears, Dickens had achieved his resolution to try and do something with the ending of the story 'which might be read by people about whom Death had been, — with a softened feeling, and with consolation.' The contemporary response to Little Nell, therefore, presents another context for the reading of Dickens' letters of condolence. Those which were written around 1841 (when *The Old Curiosity Shop* was closed), are, as with the writing of the end of the novel, written from the heart, and express the sensibilities of that particular period. In reading Dickens' thoughts about what happens beyond the grave in his letters of condolence, it is important to recognise that although tastes have changed (as Huxley's criticism illustrates), at the time of writing, his letters of condolence might, as with the death of Little Nell, have been successful. When the son of Basil Hall died, aged four, Dickens wrote on 26 May 1841, that

> The traveller from this World to the next, found the infant Child he had lost many years before, wreathing him a bower in Heaven. It must be something to you, even in your grief, to know, that one of the Angels called you father upon Earth.[24]

On 28 June 1841, Hall commented:

> Your charming idea my friend of the angels playing about & talking of their earthly Papas, has often helped to assuage my grief.[25]

This was not quite Dickens' idea, although he has obviously planted an idea in Hall's mind, which became charming to, and was embellished by him, through his dwelling upon it because he found it often helped to do so. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Dickens thought that Hall's insanity (he died in Haslar Hospital in 1844) had begun about the time that he had suffered the loss of 'a little boy for whom he had a great regard'[26]

With regard to Dickens' grief for Mary Hogarth, 'the reality' which had moved him was not just the physical reality of her having 'died in my arms'. Her becoming 'my better Angel' also involved him in discerning perceptions and drawing conclusions, which, although he feels them to be realities, are, in a scientific sense, not verifiable as such. Dickens was constantly 'casting about for materials'[27] to weave into his fictions. The reality of physical death was frequently before him, as a result of his personal bereavements. He also sought out evidence of death: whenever he was in Paris, he would visit the Morgue; when he lived at Tavistock Place, he kept two human skeletons in a cupboard; for the writing of the article, *The Shipwreck*, he visited the church where forty-four drowned men and women were laid out, awaiting burial. In casting about for materials when writing about the existence and form of a possible after-life, however, Dickens was faced with a lack of definite evidence.

There was nothing that could be seen or visited. Dickens' dislike of formalised religion, moreover, also meant that what might be said of what happens beyond the grave, had to be derived from himself.

Dickens' overflowing, therefore, which manifests itself in his use of long sentences and a rhythm of momentum, can be seen as an attempt to compensate for a lack of definite knowledge. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the lesson that such deaths will teach is presented in blank verse. In contrast to Dickens'

> Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves,
> some good is born, some gentler nature comes

Tennyson, in section LIV of *In Memoriam*, is typically more faltering:

> Behold, we know not anything;
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last — far off — at last, to all,
> And every winter turn to spring.[28]

Although Dickens presents his lesson as a statement, his attempt to qualify the good ('some'), betrays a vagueness which is at odds with the sense of confidence created by the use of the present tense. That Tennyson allows 'good' to remain unqualified, is an act of trust, and evidence of his observation that 'we know not anything'. Dickens attempts to pass over this blank area of knowledge, by asserting ('good is born', as opposed to Tennyson's 'good shall fall') and by his falling into regular blank verse. Dickens claimed his falling into blank verse happened

involuntarily and unconsciously. Tennyson, however, makes his rhythm enact the process of waiting: 'At last — far off — at last, to all'. The dashes embody in punctuation, the blank area of knowledge. The hesitancy with which he achieves a sense of trust about when and where this good shall fall, and who might receive it, is deliberately revealed and embodied by the fall from the regular iambic of the second line, into the cautious stepping forward motion of the third line.

Dickens is certain that his sources of consolation will provide 'springs of certain consolation'[29]. The dead have been 'spared all further trials', or 'spared from greater uneasiness and pain';[30] the dead have 'for ever cast away [their] early sorrows and infirmities',[31] and are 'at peace now'.[32] He asserts 'The certainty of a bright and happy world',[33] where the dead are in a 'happy state'.[34] 'The affectionate spirit' of Lewis Gaylord Clark's dead twin brother 'is now in happiness';[35] Mrs Hogarth's dead son and daughter 'have but preceded you to happiness';[36] John Leech's daughter 'has certainly gone to the inestimable happiness of God'.[37] The dead's 'form is changed for one of whose brightness we can have no conception'.[38]

The bereaved then, should derive consolation, as Dickens had and did, from the assertion that the dead are where 'sorrow and separation are unknown'.[39] As Dickens wrote in the last part of his intended epitaph for the tombstone of his wife's grandmother:

It is hard to lose
Those whom we fondly love
at any time;
But it is a happy thing
To believe
That in Eternity
There is perpetual youth
And happiness
For all.
The will of God be done![40]

Thus, since the deceased have achieved an unchanging state of 'perpetual youth / And happiness', then the bereaved should have 'the happiness of always being able to think [of the dead]...as young and promising...and not as one whom years and long sorrow and suffering had changed'.[41] And since the dead are now in Eternity, or in the light of Heaven, the bereaved should be consoled by the thought of being one day reunited with them. William Bradbury is given 'the thought of one day joining her [his dead daughter] again'. George Beadnell is told that his dead son is now 'in that happy state' where 'The meeting to which he now looks forward is darkened by no thoughts of separation'.[42] The death of Henry Burnett's ten year old son meant that 'he has rejoined his mother', who had died three months before.[44] Mrs George Hogarth is told to 'Try — do try — to think that [her dead son and daughter]...will meet you with Joy in Heaven'.[45] When Mark Lemon's son died at the age of three months, Dickens told him that

> There is a beautiful thought in Fielding's "Journey from this World to the Next," where the baby he had lost many years before was found by him all radiant and happy, building him a bower in the Elysian Fields where they were to live together when he came.[46]

In Fielding's domestic Heaven, a baby is able to build a bower without help, and can resume living with his aged father without difficulty. Their reunion is not spoilt by the fact that they were separated 'many years before', or indeed by the thought that although during that time the dead child has been in a state of perpetual youth, yet the bereaved father has grown old.

For Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, it is the thought that both the bereaved and the deceased experience changes which casts doubt upon the hope of ever being reunited. In contrast to the heightened, or distorted physical nature of those in Fielding's 'Elysian Fields', *In Memoriam* makes no mention of glorified bodies. Arthur Hallam has been 'turned to something strange' by Death; he is a spirit in 'a second state sublime' (LXI), and thus, is felt to be unreachable. Moreover, if 'Beyond the second birth of death', man has 'to learn himself anew', then his spirit will be for ever evolving from 'high to higher'. Having passed to 'higher things' (I), he might forget all 'earthly things' (XLIV), and be unrecognisable and impossible to know, especially as the bereaved have continued to experience earthly changes ('here the man is more and more' XLIV). Not only does the bereaved poet feel that 'I have lost the links that bound / Thy changes; here upon the ground', but that even after death, he will be 'evermore a life behind' (XLIV).

The insistent nature of Dickens' denials about the inevitabilty of death and of his statements about what lies beyond the grave, is called into question by the very force with which they are

asserted. Writing to Mrs George Hogarth, after the death of her son, Dickens claimed:

> There is consolation in the knowledge that you have treasure there [in Heaven][47]

'Knowledge', though, is 'the fact of recognizing as something known, or known about, before' (OED, 2), or as the Prologue to *In Memoriam* states, 'knowledge is of things we see'. The experience of Death and the existence of an afterlife, however, 'cannot be something known about before' death happens. As Newman wrote in his letter of condolence to Wilfred Wilberforce, 'Now he [Wilberforce's father] knows all: he knows all that we do not know.'[48] 'The blank that follows death', therefore, presents the bereaved with a double linguistic paradox. It is not just that the bereaved have the difficulty of finding words which give form to the sense of emptiness which is part of the experience of grief. It is also that what follows death is a blank area of knowledge for the bereaved. Part of 'the Great Mystery of Death'[49] is that it lies beyond the words of this world. In contrast to Hamlet's dread and puzzlement about 'The undiscover'd country from whose bourn / No traveller returns', Dickens views 'the distant country beyond the grave' (III. i. 79-80). Although remote, Dickens' 'distant country' suggests that it is capable of being made out. Section XXXI of *In Memoriam*, finds a traveller who has returned, but who does not tell (because he cannot or will not tell), or who does tell, but whose telling is not reported or recorded:

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
  And home to Mary's house returned
  Was this demanded — if he yearned
To hear her weeping by his grave.

Where wert thou, brother, those four days?'
  There lives no record of reply.
  Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
  The streets were filled with joyful sound,
  A solemn gladness even crowned
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
  The rest remaineth unrevealed;
  He told it not; or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist[60]

'The rest remaineth unrevealed' reveals the difficulties of faith in an after-life. 'The rest' refers to the remaining part of Lazarus' story, which is not told in the rest of St John's Gospel. Tennyson does not only want to know what happened to Lazarus after he was called from his rest, that is, his 'place of resting, or residing...abode' (OED, 5), in the charnel-cave. He is also puzzled by the rest, that is, 'the repose of death or of the grave' (OED, 6). 'Where were thou, brother, those four days?' is not a question about the body, but about where what gave his body life was resting. Although a traveller has returned from 'the undiscover'd country', where and what it is, 'remaineth unrevealed'. And yet, for a moment, at least, 'the rest' — a sense of assurance that the individuality lasts after death in a place of rest — remaineth'. That it is also 'unrevealed' means that the mind is not entirely set at rest. Tennyson knows that 'We have but faith, we cannot know' if there is an after-life, and if there is, what form it might take.

Tennyson's hesitating to approach the bereaved is also caused by his awareness of the differences between faith, belief, and knowledge. In his letter of condolence to Simeon (q.v. Chapter VI), after the death of Lady Simeon, he writes:

> Certainly to be separated, for what remains of life, from one so surpassingly sweet and true and gentle is a doom most terrible — but you will bear up, will you not? for you are brave, and you have children, and you have faith — and she lives, you know. She is not really gone.
>
> Yours most affectionately
> A. Tennyson[51]

Again, Tennyson's 'a doom most terrible' is in marked contrast to Dickens', 'There is indeed nothing terrible in such a death' (in his letter of condolence to Mary Boyle), for 'doom' is indeed a terrible word, since it begins to condemn Simeon to a lonely separation. But '— but' ameliorates this sense: the separation might, or can, be borne because it is not an eternal farewell, but 'for what remains of life', and the separation is to be eased by what remains of life, namely, Simeon's bravery, faith, and children. The repetition 'For you are brave, and you have children, and you have faith' means that each of these possible sources of consolation gather in weight: 'for you are...and you have...and you have...' are like stepping stones which ascend to the grand simplicity of 'and she lives, you know. She is not really gone'. With, 'and you have faith', however, Tennyson distinguishes between what he believes and what Simeon believes, according to his Roman Catholic faith. It is typically tactful and disinterested of Tennyson to dwell upon the faith of his correspondent ('you have faith'), rather than upon his own, and to do so without defining it. The quiet eloquence of 'she lives, you

know', comes from the shift to an assurance which Tennyson can share with his friend, despite the difference of their religious positions. The other source of the statement's eloquence, is its translation of an abstraction (human immortality) into the language of direct and particular personal knowledge. It takes a general belief in immortality, applies it, and makes it live, in a particular instance.

That Simeon's separation from his wife only remains 'for what remains of life', suggests that they are to be reunited. Unlike Dickens, Tennyson gives his belief in 'the subject that most fills his life, the immortality of man', in outline, and no more.[52] He does not elaborate on the precise form and nature of such a reunion, or existence — this 'remaineth unrevealed' —, but simply states his belief, as in the end of his letter of condolence to Lord Houghton (6 Mar. 1874: q.v. Ch. IV & VI), on the death of Lady Houghton):

> that the nobler nature does not pass from its individuality when it passes out of this one life. If you could believe as much, it would be a comfort to you, and perhaps you do. I did not intend to say even so much as this, and will say no more, only that I am
>
> Yours affectionately
> A. Tennyson[53]

The conditional tense ('if you could...it would') and the possibility combined with uncertainty of 'perhaps you do', means that any comfort is offered tentatively, and 'affectionately'. Houghton has the freedom to consider, believe, and reject such comfort. Tennyson's hesitancy about invading the private and sacred nature of sorrow, therefore, is also informed by his

feeling that to offer words about the faith of his correspondent and about an after-life as if the e were self-evident truths, could be felt as an intrusion. It is for this reason that, whereas Dickens begins a consideration of these sources of consolation after a few preliminary sentences, Tennyson tends to delay his words of religious comfort until the end of his letters, where the profession of a belief in personal immortality, combines with the profession of friendship as made in the signing off, 'Yours affectionately'.

In his letter of condolence to Queen Victoria, written after the death of her youngest son, Leopold (1 April 1884), Tennyson wrote that 'your People',

> pray God to comfort you with the assurance that a life so full of promise has not been lived in vain here and is ever advancing toward higher fulfilments *there*.
>
> Your Majesty's affect^te. and loyal servt.
>
> TENNYSON[54]

Although he offers an 'assurance' — 'a positive declaration intended to give confidence' (OED, 3) — Tennyson does not elaborate upon what this assurance is based, or why 'a life so full of promise has not been lived in vain here', or where '*there*' is, or what 'higher fulfilments' are. That he leaves so much unsaid, means that Tennyson's 'assurance' encompasses both 'objective certainty' (OED, 6) and 'subjective certainty' (OED, 6). He avoids giving an assurance 'in a bad sense: Hardihood, audacity, presumption, impudence' (OED, 10).

Dickens' confidence about the existence and form of an afterlife are made with confidence — 'firm trust or reliance' (1), 'the feeling sure or certain *of* a fact' (2) —, as in his letter of condolence to the Honourable Mrs Richard Watson, after the death of her husband (5 August 1852):

> May all those compassionate and hopeful lessons of the great teacher who shed Divine tears for the dead bring their full comfort to you! I have no fear of that. My confidence is certainty.[55]

Dickens' 'confidence' both in 'all those compassionate and hopeful lessons of the great teacher' and in their bringing 'full comfort to you', is an assurance marked by boldness and fearlessness. Such certainty which arises from a reliance on himself and on divine support, means that his condolences, such as 'The certainty of a bright and happy world beyond the Grave', although asserted from a heartfelt, earnest and didactic desire to be of service, often shade into 'confidence' in its other 'bad sense. An assurance based on insufficient or improper grounds; excess of assurance, over-boldness, hardihood, presumption, impudence' (OED, 4). As well as asserting the certainty of his views about that distant country beyond the grave, Dickens also has no doubts that these views will condole, and that the bereaved will be condoled. As he told Forster in his letter of condolence to him, on the death of Forster's brother: 'I know — I *know*, my dear friend — that before the ground is green above him, you will be content.'[56] After the death of Henry Burnett's son, Dickens writes: 'I cannot but think [...] that a few hours will reconcile you to this loss'.[57] After the death of Mark Lemon's two-year-old daughter,

Dickens writes:

> My dear Lemon
> We are deeply sorry to receive the mournful intelligence of your calamity. But we know you will both have found comfort in that blessed belief, from which the sacred figure with the child upon His knee is, in all stages of our lives, inseparable, for of such is the kingdom of God!
> We join in affectionate loves to you and your dear wife. She well deserves your praise, I am sure.
> Ever affectionately yours
>
> [CD][68]

Dickens seems as certain of the Lemons having 'found comfort in that blessed belief', as he is about Mrs Lemon deserving her husband's praise. The indistinctness of 'that blessed belief' assumes that Lemon knows what he is referring to, and believes in it, and has already benefited from it. In Dickens' next letter of condolence to Lemon, after the death of Lemon's three month old son, Dickens ends:

> It is hard to lose any child, but there are many blessed sources of consolation in the loss of a baby.[69]

In contrast to Dickens' overflowing in his letters of condolence of the 1840's, this letter, dated 26 April, 1855, does not elaborate on what these blessed sources of consolation are. Again, Dickens seems to have known, or assumed, that Lemon knows and believes, and has found comfort in these sources.

Unlike Dickens, Tennyson is aware that in grief, 'the sensuous frame / Is racked with pangs that conquer trust' (L) in God, and in a belief in the personal immortality of the soul. As he wrote in his letter of condolence to Princess Alice:

> when I was some three or four years older than yourself I suffered what seemed to me to shatter all my life so that I desired to die rather than live.[60]

Because grief made him 'falter where I firmly trod' (LV), he makes the falterings of faith part of the substance of his consolation. Whereas Dickens assumes that his bereaved correspondent has an unshakeable belief in immortality, Tennyson continues to admit to doubts. Thus, his letter of condolence to Edmund Lushington ends:

> We shall meet again if we be worthy to meet her. Meantime we must bear.[61]

The funeral monument commonplace, 'We shall meet again' is given an uncommon qualification here, as 'if' creates an uncertainty. Where and how such a meeting might occur is left unsaid. The bereaved must bear the separation rather than speculate on the where, when and how of a possible reunion. Unlike Dickens, what Tennyson has to say about the dead is expressed as a feeling rather than as a 'certainty' or dogmatic belief. Whereas Dickens does not allow any dissenting voices, Tennyson does, as in his letter of condolence on the death of his old Cambridge friend, the Reverend W. H. Brookfield. Tennyson's word of comfort to Mrs Brookfield (18 July 1874) reads:

> My dear Jane
> You will believe that I feel for you, and that I feel that the dead lives whatever the pseudosavants may say, and so
> May God bless you and yours
> A. T.[62]

In *Hamlet*, Gertrude remarks that 'all that lives must die'. E. A. Abbott, in *A Shakespearian Grammar* (1870), has shown that the use

of the inflexional 's' with a plural subject was not uncommon in the seventeenth century. Tennyson's use of it in his letter of condolence to Mrs Brookfield in 1874 ('the *dead* lives') is uncommon and is made even more striking because of the paradoxical juxtaposition of 'dead' and 'lives'. 'The *dead* lives', inverts the commonplace, 'all that lives must die', but in a way which arrestingly combines a statement about a general belief in the continued life of the dead (the dead live), with an application of this belief in a particular instance ('the dead [husband of Mrs Brookfield] lives'). The potentially painful clash of a general belief as it meets a particular occasion, is rendered by the jarring nature of 'The *dead* lives'. The emphasiser '*dead*', and its following contradiction 'lives', is also expressive of the limitations of language in attempting to describe what happens after death. That Tennyson is also expressing the difficulty of finding words for that which is beyond the words of this world, is given further credence by the fact that 'pseudosavants' is not listed in the OED. That other words beginning 'pseudo' are 'nearly all terms of modern [in the examples cited, nineteeth century] science', means that Tennyson has coined the kind of term which a savant — 'one professionally engaged in scientific research' — would coin. The prefix 'pseudo', however, indicates that such savants are false, or have only a 'deceptive resemblance' to, or are 'an abnormal or erratic form' of scientific researchers. Whether or not 'the dead lives' is, as Tennyson implies in his letter to Mrs Brookfield, a matter of feeling and belief, not a matter of scientific, or pseudo-scientific, verification.

'Believing where we cannot prove' (Prologue) means that unlike Dickens, Tennyson does not obtrude his condolences as if they were certainties, but continues to admit to doubt, as in his letter of condolence to Sophia Elmhirst (26 June 1871: q.v. Ch. VI), after the death of her son:

> I doubt whether I can bring you any solace, except indeed by stating my own belief that the son whom you loved is not really what we call dead, but more actually living than when alive here. You cannot catch the voice, or feel the hands, or kiss the cheek — that is all — a separation for an hour, not an eternal farewell. If it were not so, that which made us would seem too cruel a Power to be worshipped, and could not be loved. But I trust that you believe all this, and by this time have attained to some degree of tranquillity: and your husband also.[63]

The answer to Tennyson's own questions about his letter of condolence to Sir John Simeon, 'what can one say, what comfort can one give?', is to state 'my own belief' and to 'trust' in the belief of his correspondent. The balance of his phrasing — 'the son whom you so loved' and a Power 'could not be loved' —, means that love embraces all: human love is bound to divine love. 'The son whom you so loved' is linked to God, who 'so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). Human life and love, therefore, is not in vain — 'not an eternal farewell' — but has eternal life because of the love of God. Tennyson's human 'trust' that Elmhirst 'believe[s] all this', is an echo of religious faith: she too 'must trust that those we call the dead / Are breathers of an ampler day / For ever nobler ends' (CXVIII).

'Not really what we call dead but more actually living than when alive here' again raises the limitations of language to describe what happens after death. 'Dead', 'living' and 'alive' are words which only half reveal; by pointing out their inadequacies ('what we call dead'), and by bringing them close to breaking point ('more actually living'), Tennyson is able to use them to point to that which lies beyond them. That it is 'a separation for an hour, not an eternal farewell', implies that there is to be some kind of a reunion, at some future time. That Tennyson writes of a separation from the 'voice', 'hands', and 'cheek', suggests 'that the individuality lasts after death and we are not utterly absorbed into the Godhead'.[64]

Another reason for Tennyson's feeling that perhaps there is nothing to say and no comfort to give, is that he is reluctant to offer assurances of an after-life, as if they were self-evident truths. To do so, would be to ignore that faith involves an element of blindness. A condoler, however, has a duty to try and offer 'the Balm of Consolation'. Rather than acknowledging that we cannot know what happens after death, a condoler might be inclined to 'resolve the doubt' (LXVIII), and offer large speeches; assurances which are near to being deceptions and flatteries.

To J. S. questions this peculiar pressure on the condoler, that of having to say or write something which can soothe the bereaved.

> **How *should* I soothe you anyway,**
> **Who miss the brother of your youth?**

As well as meaning, 'to calm, to reduce the force or intensity of a passion or pain' (OED, 9) , 'soothe' also means 'to confirm, encourage, or humour' (OED, 4), and 'to blandish, cajole, or please [...] to flatter' (OED, 5). A 'soother' is both 'a flatterer. *Obs.*' (OED, 1) and also 'one who [...] calms, comforts' (OED, 2). In his poem, *To J. S.*, Tennyson dramatises the struggle of offering genuine consolation, which is the difficulty of finding words which calm and support, and which are also truthful. The written cry, 'Vain solace!' at the beginning of the fourteenth stanza, highlights this double concern. For words intended to condole can not only be trivial and empty and commonplace, but can become even more 'vain', by their being used to express religious consolation as though they were unquestionable truths. *To J. S.* demonstrates how in an attempt to calm, condolences can present too favourably a view of an after-life and a belief in God, based on insufficient grounds:

> I will not say, "God's ordinance
> Of Death is blown in every wind".[66]

'Blown in every wind' might be felt as a caress, because it makes Death seem as if it is part of the natural world, as in the opening lines of the poem, where

> The wind that beats the mountain, blows
> More softly round the open wold.[66]

That 'death is blown *in*' rather than than 'round' or 'on' every wind, carries with it a sense that Death is relentless, all-ranging and arbitrarily destructive, an idea which is developed by

'ordinance', which, as well as meaning 'that which is ordained or decreed by the Deity' (OED, 5b) also means an 'Arrangement in ranks or row, esp. in order of battle; battle array' (OED, 1). Thus, Tennyson has acknowledged, as P. Allen has shown 'how distasteful Spedding found the traditional modes of Christian consolation'.[67] '"God's ordinance of Death"' reveals how a religious consolation attempts to make peace and order out of the dislocating experience of grief, and how such consolation seeks to present religious questions and doubts as if they were unquestionable truths. Christopher Ricks hears 'frequent ambiguity' in the final stanza and the final word ('secure of change') of *To J. S.*: 'for all its mildness, the end of 'To J. S.' is forcefully perplexing'.[68]

Dickens is confident and certain ('I know — I *know* — ') about his sources of consolation, his ability to communicate them, and their doing good. By contrast, not only does Tennyson know that 'it is very little that words can do', but 'I know well, it is God alone who can give comfort.'[69] It is this knowledge which informs Tennyson's letters of condolence and makes them noble, because they are not just expressive of his age (as the death of Little Nell is, and Dickens' letters of condolence of that period often are). Tennyson's hesitancy and sense of inadequacy and the falterings of faith, are both personal, and also part of the community of experience and expression which is common to the experience of grief.

Dickens' insistence and assertion in his letters of condolence, is partly a result of his emotional and psychological need to deny the anguish and the doubts which bereavement may cause. He seeks to fill up the gap with activity and with words. In his letters of condolence, Dickens sets out a creed of his own making, based on his imagination and emotions. Because Dickens will not entertain doubts, his certainties about an after-life are in need of constant repair. Dickens' attempt to convince another, is also an attempt to convince himself. Tennyson, on the other hand, has a sense, as in section XCVI of *In Memoriam*, that

> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.[70]

Tennyson recognises that creeds can become commonplaces — worn out through blind or unmindful repetition —, if they are not made active. Moreover, creeds can be merely abstract, unless they are applied to real instances. For Tennyson, the quality and honesty of a faith, that which makes it live, is determined by the quality and honesty of its doubt. In his letters of condolence, Tennyson's achievement is to recognise the differences of religious belief which exist between him and his correspondents, whilst holding firm to his faith in immortality, and in the continued links between the living and the dead. Tennyson succeeds in making a general belief about immortality and divine love apply in particular instances, but he does not assert. That Tennyson continues to admit to doubts, makes his condolences the more honest.

VIII

ENDINGS

'after we have all been laid in dust'

Arthur Hallam'

In his will, Dickens had been careful to 'emphatically direct that I be buried in an inexpensive, unostentatious and strictly private manner'. Although Lord Houghton interpreted this as Westminster Abbey, there were only twelve people present at his funeral on 14 June 1870 (five days after his death), and Dickens' other requests were complied with, namely,

> that no public announcement be made of the time or place of my burial; that at the utmost no more than three plain mourning coaches be employed; and that those who attend my funeral wear no scarf, cloak, black bow, long hat-band, or other such revolting absurdity. I DIRECT that my name be inscribed in plain English letters on my tomb, without the addition of 'Mr' or 'Esquire.' I conjure my friends on no account to make me the subject of any monument, memorial, or testimonial whatever.[2]

Forster noted that

> The solemnity had not lost by the simplicity. Nothing so grand or, so touching could have accompanied it, as the stillness and the silence of the vast Cathedral. Then later in the day, and the following day, came unbidden mourners in such crowds, that the Dean had to request permission to keep open the grave until Thursday...[3]

Tennyson would have liked to have been buried in a country churchyard; Hallam Tennyson remembered his father's 'detestation of the gloomy pomp of funerals, black plumes, black coaches, etc.'.[4] In his *Memoir*, Hallam Tennyson records that after his father's death:

> We placed *Cymbeline* with him, and a laurel wreath from Virgil's tomb [gathered for this reason in 1881 by Alfred Austin], and wreaths of roses [from Emily Tennyson] , the flower which he loved above all flowers, and some of his Alexandrian laurel, the poet's laurel. On the evening of the 11th the coffin was set upon our waggonette, made beautiful with stag's-horn moss and the scarlet Lobelia Cardinalis; and draped with the pall, woven by working men and women of the north, and embroidered by the cottagers of Keswick; and then we covered him with the wreaths and crosses of flowers sent from all parts of Great Britain. The coachman, who had been for more than thirty years my father's faithful servant, led the horse.
>
> Ourselves, the villagers, and the school children followed over the moor through our lane towards a glorious sunset, and later through Haslemere under bright starlight.[5]

At such an hour, and in such circumstances, one feels that they should have all been heading for a country churchyard, where they could have all worn white and gold. Instead, there were huge crowds outside Westminster Abbey, Tennyson's body passed from his son's private care, into the state occasion of an interment in Poet's Corner. Hallam Tennyson, however, felt that 'Nothing could have been more simple and majestic than the funeral service: and the tributes of sympathy which we received [...] were not only remarkable for their universality, but for their depth of feeling'.[6]

Henry James, who was in the Abbey, felt that it was the universality of the occasion, which resulted in a loss of depth of

feeling. He wrote that it was

> a lovely day, the Abbey looked beautiful, everyone was there, but something — I don't know what — of real impressiveness — was wanting [...there appeared to be] too many masters of Balliol, too many Deans and Alfred Austins.[7]

Such an event seems to have been all about appearance: although 'everyone was there', for James, there was something hollow about it all. James' observation, 'the Abbey looked beautiful', seems to be more a comment about the intrinsic nature of the Abbey than about the effect of Tennyson's funeral upon it. In contrast, the waggonette upon which Tennyson was laid had been 'made beautiful' by personal touches, such as 'the flower he loved above all'. Hallam Tennyson noted that inside the Abbey 'the nave was lined by men of the Balaclava Light Brigade, by some of the London Rifle Volunteers, and by the boys of the Gordon Boys' Home, in token of their gratitude for what he had done for each and all of them'.[8] James' 'wanting' reveals the potential for mere formality contained in the phrase, 'in token of'. 'Wanting' expresses both James' dissatisfaction with the way that true and sincere personal remembrances had become more like token gestures, and his wish that the service had been more 'real'. In contrast to 'faithful' and 'loved' (at Haslemere), in the Abbey there were impersonal representations: 'too many masters of Balliol, too many Deans', who only conveyed an impression of 'impressiveness'.

According to Thomas Hardy, 'owing to some slight confusion in the arrangements many people who should have been in the procession were not, but were standing elsewhere'.[9] The villagers

and cottagers, and schoolchildren of Haslemere could be regarded as those 'who should have been in the procession [in the Abbey] but were not'. There were others also — Queen Victoria and Gladstone —, who perhaps should have been there, but were standing elsewhere. After the service, Hardy wrote to his wife, telling her that 'George Meredith was there — also Henry James, Huxley &c.', as if the funeral was a kind of extension of the Athenaeum Club where he was staying.[10] Although it seems that 'everyone was there' (Hardy's '&c.'), there seems to have been no one there who had known Tennyson as long, or with as much simple devotion, as his own coachman.

Hallam Tennyson's view that 'Nothing could have been more simple and majestic than the funeral service', seeks to continue the sense of perfection with which Tennyson's death had been presented. Dr Dabbs observed that 'Nothing could have been more striking than the scene during the last few hours [...] the moonlight, the majestic figure'.[11] Although Forster's view of Dickens' funeral — 'Nothing so grand or so touching' — is strikingly similar to Hallam Tennyson's view of his father's service, Forster's comment remains unchallenged and unchallengeable, because of the privacy of the occasion. From the grave, Dickens managed to continue to 'DIRECT' affairs. His stipulations in his will meant that at his funeral, there were no dissenters to the idea that it was 'grand' and 'touching'. Although at his passing away, Tennyson passed his affairs and his memory to the trust of his son, Hallam Tennyson's control, with regard to his father's funeral, passed out of his hands, as his

father's body passed into the Abbey. Although Tennyson had always tried to discourage and avoid unbidden admirers, his funeral was full of them. On the other hand, the Inimitable Boz's flamboyance and desire for public applause, ended in an expression of plainness and restraint.

*

In Memoriam made new commonplaces of grief. Not only in the sense of renewing old ones, but also in the sense of providing new ones. Part of the reason for its continued popularity (31 editions by 1883) can be attributed to the fact that Tennyson had successfully found the right words, and had said what others could not say at all, or could not say without sounding commonplace. As R. H. Hutton commented, 'No poet ever made the dumb speak so effectually', or managed to express 'the inadequacy of human speech to express human yearnings'.[12]. Although Hutton is speaking about the bereaved, 'the dumb' also refers to condolers: to those who often felt that 'I cannot tell you how grieved I was...', or who felt the inadequacy of human speech ('how utterly vain are words'). *In Memoriam* became something of a source for ready-made expressions, in a variety of grieving occasions.

Queen Victoria substituted 'widow' for 'widower' and 'her ' for 'his', in section XIII:

> Tears of the widower, where he sees
> A late-lost form that sleep reveals.
> And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
> Her place is empty, fall like these.

Against section XXV ('I know that this was Life'), she had written 'So it was for 22 years'. On the last line of the first stanza of section XXIX ('How dare we keep our Christmas-eve'), she had written 'We did not keep it in 1861'.[13] Many others also were able to make the poem speak for them; to change its particularites to suit the particularities of their, or another's, grief.

The wall tablet at the foot of the main avenue at Highgate Cemetery, has the last ten lines of section XXII ('There sat the Shadow feared of man / Who broke our fair companionship'), ironically, less than fifty paces from where Tennyson attended the 'pompous funeral' of his mother. A vault on the outer ring of the Lebanon Circle catacombs (1878) has the penultimate stanza of section LIV,

> Behold we know not anything
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last — far off — at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring.

Benjamin Jowett, for one, quoted phrases from the poem in his letters of condolence. To Viscount Sherbrooke, he wrote, in a letter dated 4 November 1884:

> I do not suppose that words can make a calamity of this kind lighter, and I cannot offer 'the vacant chaff well-meant for grain.'[14]

He used the same phrase from section VI again in a letter to Emily Tennyson about the illness of Hallam Tennyson, (1 May 1887).[15] He also quoted 'Be near me when my light is low', to end a letter of

condolence to the Countess of Wemyss (Jan. 16, 1893).[16] Even his letter to Emily Tennyson, dated 13 October 1892, telling her of the funeral of her husband, echoed, albeit with more assurance, both in its expression and in its idea, the last line of section VII: 'He is not here; but far away / The noise of life begins again..'.

He is not there, but with God, where we too soon shall be'[17]

What had been a 'very impersonal poem as well as personal' had been made personal and also impersonal, in the sense that the repeated use of the poem rendered parts of it commonplace. The poem's underlying, and not always so underlying, unquiet, has been overworn. The tremulous nature of loss and gain through which the poem travels is not easy to detect in the now commonplace, 'Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all' (XXVII). The struggle to find in Nature evidences for the existence of the personal immortality of the soul is not remembered in the now commonplace, 'Nature red in tooth and claw' (LVI).

*

Geoffrey Gorer traces the demise of the full panoply of funeral customs and mourning which were common to the Victorian age, to the end of the First World War. Gorer claims that the large scale bereavement which the war created rendered such forms obsolete. A weakening of belief in God, and in an afterlife, together with

cremation, which until 1885, was prohibited in England, may also account for the decline. Objections to cremation were made on religious grounds. Catacombs, coffins and vaults were intended to ensure that the dead were secure from change, and could be raised in their entirety at the last trump. It was thought that ashes which were scattered to the four winds would make resurrection impossible. The cremation service, which is often short and agnostic, and the act of cremation itself, both emphasise the idea that the dead are merely dead matter, in need of rapid and efficient disposal. There is evidence, however, that the customs of the Victorian age are undergoing a revival. T. Cribb & Sons, for instance, the only funeral directors in the country to own horses, remark that the provision of horses and hearse at funerals has become 'very popular'.[18]

At the City of London cemetery and crematorium (Aldersbrook Road, London E12) open day on a Sunday in July 1995,

> Chief Administrative Officer, Roger Willis anticipated 5,000 punters by closing time.[19]

In 1994, there were 5,000 cremations by the close of the year. He goes on to explain that

> The idea [of the open day] is to open the doors to the general public because nowadays they want to know what death is all about.[20]

The doors of the cremator are already open to the general public. The daily average number of cremations at the City of London crematorium is twenty. The idea that by opening the doors to

potential customers, the living will 'know what death is all about', seeks to replace a lack of knowledge about dying and about what happens after death, with the certain knowledge of how a body is disposed. '"You find out what really goes on,"' said one visitor, '"You see that they really do burn the coffins."'[21] Such knowledge is seen to be a comfort, as if those asking, '"How long does it take, and how do you know if it's done?"', anticipate that when the time comes, they might be present in more than just a physical sense. That wanting to know '"how long it will take?"', suggests a wish not to be kept waiting, is a means of delaying a fully conscious sense that such an ending is, humanly speaking, final. '"How long does it take, and how do you know if it's done?"', attempts to bring questions about dying and the possible resurrection of the body, back into the control of the living.

Parkes notes that the bereaved have a strong sense of the dead person being located in his place of burial. Although the mechanistic and generally applied operations of the cremator reduces all to ashes, yet it also paradoxically embodies common, particular and spritual concerns. '"How do you know if it's all over?"' applies not only to the act of cremation. It also recreates the uncertainty about whether death will end our existence. The feeling that conventions are merely conventional, and the paradoxes and felt inadequacies of language which are created when trying to articulate death and what might lie beyond it, are not resolved, but are instead common to all, and thus, are ever-renewed.

APPENDIX A

DICKENS' SURVIVING LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

At the time of my writing this thesis, Dickens' correspondence is still in the process of being collected and published. The magisterial Pilgrim Edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, contains over 14,500 letters, was begun in 1965 and is still in progress (Volume VII [1852-55] was published in 1993). Dickens died in 1870, so this edition has another fourteen years of his letters to collect and publish. Some of Dickens' letters written between 1856 and 1870 can be found in the last two volumes of the Nonesuch Edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. W. Dexter (2 vols.; 1936) [hereafter referred to as Nonesuch]. The letters which are covered by both editions, however, cast doubt upon the general reliability of the Nonesuch Edition. It is not just that the Pilgrim Edition contains many more letters and annotations, it has also found that many letters previously published had been misdated. This is not to say that the Pilgrim Edition now presents an authoritative text in comparison with the Nonesuch edition. The editors of Volume I of the Pilgrim Edition found that placing the letters in chronological order was a major problem, because out of the 1059 letters included, 722 had been headed by Dickens with no more than a day of the week, and occasionally simply by the time of day.

Dickens' twenty-seven surviving letters of condolence are arranged here in chronological order. References are to *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens* ed. M. House *et al.* (7 vols.; in progress, 1965) [hereafter referred to as Letters of CD].

Letter dated	to	on the death of his/ her	aged
1) 18 Nov. 1835 (Letters of CD, i. 94)	John Macrone	son	1 month.
2) 7 Mar. 1838 (Letters of CD, i. 384-5).	W. Harrison Ainsworth	wife	?45 yrs.
3) 3 Mar. 1839 (Ibid., i. 515-6).	William Bradbury	daughter	——
4) 19 Dec. 1839 (Ibid., i. 619-20).	George Beadnell	son	32 yrs.
5) 26 May 1841 (Ibid., ii. 285).	Basil Hall	son	4 yrs.
6) 28 Sep. 1841 (Ibid., ii. 393-4).	Lewis Gaylord Clark	twin-brother	33 yrs.
7) 24 Oct. 1841 (Ibid., ii. 408).	Mrs George Hogarth	son	20 yrs.
8) 26 July 1842 (Ibid., iii. 288).	Thomas Mitton	father	c. 59 yrs.
9) 8 Jan. 1845 (Ibid., iv. 246-7).	John Forster	brother	
10) 31 Jan. 1849 (Ibid., v. 482).	Henry Burnett	son	3 months.

11) 9 Mar. 1849 John Leech — daughter, 1 yr, 8 mnths.
(Ibid., v. 505-6).

12 19 Oct. 1849 George Beadnell — wife —
(Ibid., v. 626).

13) 28 Feb. 1850 William Macready — daughter —
(Ibid., vi. 49)

14) 31 Jan. 1851 Mark Lemon — daughter 2 yrs.
(Ibid., vi. 275).

15) 10 Oct. 1851 Mary Boyle — mother 78 yrs.
(Ibid., 515).

16) 5 Aug. 1852 Mrs Richard Watson — husband 52 yrs.
(Ibid., vi. 734-5).

17) 5 Oct. 1852 William Macready — wife 47 yrs.
(Ibid., vii. 771-1).

18) 17 Mar. 1854 Lady Talfourd — husband 59 yrs.
(Ibid., vii. 295).

19) 26 Apr. 1855 Mark Lemon — son 3 months.
(Ibid., vii. 599).

20) 13 June 1855 Mrs Winter — daughter, 1 yr, 2 weeks.
(Ibid., vii. 648-9).

21) 5 June 1859 Mr White — child —
(Nonesuch, iii. 105).

22) 6 Feb. 1863 Rev. Hugh Robert Hughes — brother —
(Nonesuch, iii. 285).

23) 5 Nov. 1863 Charles Lever on 'Mrs Lever's grief': a son(?).
(Nonesuch, iii. 370).

24) 13 May 1866 Thomas Carlyle — wife 65 years.
(Nonesuch, iii. 473).

25) 19 May 1867 George Stanfield father 74 yrs.
(Nonesuch, iii. 527).

26) 16 Mar. 1869 Florence Olliffee father ——
(Nonesuch, iii. 713).

27) 20 July 1869 William Macready daughter 34 yrs.
(Nonesuch, iii. 730).

The following table presents further information on the recipients of these letters and attempts to place Dickens' letters of condolence in the context of his experience of deaths in his immediate family and friends. (Here, CDLC, followed by a number, refers to the letter of condolence in the list above).

18 May 1835: CDLC, 1: to the publisher John Macrone (to whom Dickens had sold the copyright of *Sketches by Boz*), on the death of his son.

7 Mar. 1837: his wife's next youngest sister, Mary Hogarth, died suddenly, aged seventeen. This was the first and the most long-lasting bereavement which Dickens suffered. Mary Hogarth had lived with the Dickens' since their marriage in April 1836. Mary Hogarth's death was the only time that Dickens failed to produce a number of a book on time (in fact two numbers because he was writing *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* concurrently).

Forster in his *The Life of Dickens*, (1874, repr. 1892), remarks that Dickens' 'grief and suffering were intense, and affected him...through many after years.'[1] For a year after her death, Dickens dreamed about her every night. When at Niagara Falls during his first visit to America in 1842, Dickens felt that 'she has been here many times'.[2] In 1843, in a letter to Mary Hogarth's mother, he wrote, 'She is in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, and have greatly prospered in anything, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.'[3]

7 Mar. 1838: CDLC, 2: to his friend, the novelist, W. Harrison Ainsworth, on the death of his wife.

3 Mar. 1839: CDLC, 3: to one of Dickens' printers, William

Bradbury, on the death of his daughter. In this letter Dickens makes the only reference to the death of Mary Hogarth in his letters of condolence. He wrote: 'It is nearly two years ago since I lost in one short night a young and lovely creature'.

19 Dec. 1839: CDLC, 4: to George Beadnell, the father of Maria Beadnell (whom Dickens had been in love with and had unsuccesfully courted from 1830 to 1833).

26 May 1841: CDLC, 5: to his friend, Basil Hall, on the death of his youngest son.

28 Sept. 1841: CDLC, 6: to Lewis Gaylord Clark, on the death of his twin-brother, the first American to advocate in print a law of international copyright. At the time of writing this letter of condolence, Dickens had not met either brother.

24 Oct. 1841: CDLC, 7: to his mother-in-law, Mrs George Hogarth, on the death of her son.

26 July 1842: CDLC, 8: to Thomas Mitton, on the death of his father. Dickens and Mitton had first met in 1827, when they had both worked in the offices of a solicitor. After Mitton became a lawyer, he was Dickens' first business agent.

8 Jan 1845: CDLC, 9: to John Forster, on the death of his brother.

April 1847: his publisher, William Hall (of Chapman and Hall).

Sept. 1848: his sister, 'Fanny'. This bereavement meant that Dickens' next two letters of condolence CDLC, 10 & 11, were written on mourning paper.

31 Jan. 1849: CDLC, 10: to his brother-in-law, Henry Burnett, on the death of Burnett's three month old son.

9 Mar. 1849: CDLC, 11: to his friend and illustrator, John Leech, on the death of his daughter.

19 Oct. 1849: CDLC, 12: to George Beadnell, on the death of Beadnell's wife.

29 Jan. 1850: friend, 'Poor dear [Lord] Jeffrey!'.[4] Dickens was 'so stunned by the announcement, that I felt it in that

wounded part of me almost directly; and the bad symptoms (modified) returned within a few hours'.[5]

28 Feb. 1850: CDLC, 13: to his friend (they first met in 1837), the actor, William Macready, on the death of his daughter.

31 Jan. 1851: CDLC, 14: to his friend, the author, journalist and first editor of *Punch*, Mark Lemon, on the death of Lemon's daughter, aged two.

31 Mar. 1851: Dickens' father, aged sixty-six.

14 Apr. 1851: his ninth child, Dora Annie, aged eight months.

10 Oct. 1851: CDLC, 15 (written on mourning paper): to his friend Mary Boyle, on the death of her mother.

24 July 1852: death of his friend, 'Poor dear [Richard] Watson!'.[6] Dickens was friendly with both of the Watsons. He had first met them in Switzerland in 1846 and his relations continued to be very intimate long after he left Lausanne; he visited the Watsons at their home, Rockingham Castle, Nottinghamshire, which he used as the model for Chesney Wold in *Bleak House*. Dickens had dedicated *David Copperfield* (1850) to Watson.

5 Aug. 1852: CDLC, 16: to Mrs Richard Watson.

8 Aug. 1852: death of his friend 'Poor [Count] d'Orsay!'.[7] Dickens commented: 'It is a tremendous consideration that friends should fall around us in such awful numbers as we attain middle life. What a field of battle it is!'[8]

5 Oct. 1852: CDLC, 17: to William Macready, on the death of his wife and Dickens' friend Mrs Macready. After her death, Dickens wrote: 'Ah me! ah me! This tremendous sickle certainly does cut deep into the surrounding corn, when one's own small blade has ripened. But *this* is all a dream, may be, and death will wake us'.[9]

17 Mar. 1854: CDLC, 18: to Lady Talfourd on the death of her husband and Dickens' friend, Sergeant Talfourd. Dickens had dedicated *The Pickwick Papers* to him.

26 Apr. 1855: CDLC, 19: to Mark Lemon on the death of his three month old son.

13 June 1855: CDLC, 20: to his first love Maria Beadnell, by now Mrs Winter, on the death of her daughter. Dickens had met her again in 1854, after a gap of twenty-one years. He was disappointed to find her so changed, and she became the model for Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*. In this letter of condolence to her, Dickens makes reference to the death of his own child, Dora Annie, in 1851: 'A poor little baby of mine lies in Highgate Cemetery — and I laid her, just as you think of laying yours, in the catacombs there until I made a resting-place for all of us in the free air'.

5 June 1859: CDLC, 21: to an unidentified correspondent, Mrs White, possibly on the death of her child.

? Apr. 1860: his brother, Alfred Lamert Dickens, aged thirty-eight.

? Nov. 1860: his great friend and illustrator, Frank Stone, aged fifty-nine.

? Oct. 1861: the manager of Dickens' public reading tours, Arthur Smith.

——— Dickens' brother-in-law and friend, Henry Austin.

6 Feb. 1862: CDLC, 22: to the Reverend Hugh Robert Hughes, on the death of his brother, the Reverend Stephen Roose Hughes. Dickens had met the deceased only once in 1860, in order to write an article for his weekly magazine, *All the Year Round*. In the article, called *The Shipwreck*, Dickens extolled Hughes, the good clergyman, for his tireless efforts to recover, identify and bury nearly two hundred drowned men and women.

? 1862: Arthur Smith's brother, Albert Smith.

? Apr. 1863: friend and painter, Augustus Egg.

? Aug. 1863: mother-in-law, Mrs George Hogarth.

? Sept. 1863: his mother, Elizabeth Dickens, aged seventy-four.

5 Nov. 1863: CDLC, 23: to the friend and novelist, Charles Lever (a contributor to *All the Year Round*). In this letter of condolence, Dickens refers to his own griefs suffered over the last three years. He wrote: 'Your trial has not yet been mine, and I am in my fifty-second year with a sound of cheering behind me; but my heart faints sometimes under such troubles as I do know, and if it were not for a certain stand-up determination, I should be down'.

As the letter mentions 'Mrs Lever's grief', 'Your trial has not yet been mine', could refer to to the fact that Dickens had not yet suffered the death of a grown-up child.

24 Dec. 1863: his friend, William Thackeray. An observer at Thackeray's funeral remarked that Dickens had a look of bereavement on his face which was indescribable.

7 Feb. 1864: Dickens' fifty-second birthday. on which he learnt that his son, Walter Savage Landor, had died in India on 31 December 1863, aged twenty-two.

? Nov. 1864: the death of his friend and illustrator, John Leech, 'affected Dickens very much'.[10]

13 May 1866: CDLC, 24: to Thomas Carlyle, on the death of his wife. 'It was a terrible shock to me,' wrote Dickens.

19 May 1867: CDLC, 25; to George Stanfield on the death of his father, Clarkson, aged seventy-four; Dickens' friend and one of his illustrators.

? Oct. 1868: the last of Dickens' surviving brothers, Frederick, aged forty-eight.

——— 1869: his printer and friend, William Bradbury, aged sixty-nine.

8 Mar. 1869: his old and great friend, Sir James Emerson Tennent. Dickens had dedicated *Our Mutual Friend* to him.

16 Mar. 1869: CDLC, 26: to Florence Olliffee, on the death of her father, Sir Joseph.

20 July 1869: CDLC, 27: to William Macready, on the death of his daughter.

27 Apr. 1870: his friend since 1838, the painter, Daniel Maclise, aged sixty four (?).

22 May 1870: friend, Mark Lemon, aged sixty-one. This led Dickens to think of the crowd of friendly companions in letters and art who had fallen from the ranks. 'And none of them in his sixtieth year,' Dickens said, 'very few of them even fifty'."

This is a formidable list of bereavements. Not only are there few years when Dickens did not suffer a bereavement, but there are some years, such as 1863, when Dickens suffered a bereavement hard upon the heels of another.

At least thirteen of Dickens's twenty-seven letters of condolence were written on the deaths of children (CDLC, 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 & 27). Thirteen would be fourteen if it could be definitely established that *CDLC*, 23 was written on the death of a son. Of these thirteen children, seven are definitely known to have died before the age of five. Moreover, the number of deaths on this list is swelled by the fact that Dickens was one of five brothers (all died before Dickens, one in childhood) and three sisters (one of whom died in childhood, one before Dickens' death, one after). The list of bereavements is perhaps also increased by Dickens' fame: he was a gregarious and public man, and as a result, the circle of his acquaintances and friends was perhaps uncommonly large.

APPENDIX B

TENNYSON'S SURVIVING LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

There are less than 2000 of Tennyson's letters still extant, covering the period from 1821 to 1892. Although *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson* is complete, this is only in the sense that there are no more letters to publish. There are large gaps in his correspondence, there are years and correspondents for which there are hardly any letters, and there are many letters of which only mere fragments survive, often of one line only.

The following list presents Tennyson's twenty-one surviving letters of condolence in chronological order. References are to *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson,* ed. C. Y. Lang and E. F. Shannon Jr. (3 vols.; 1982-) [hereafter referred to as Letters of ALT].

Letter dated	to	on the death of a
1) 26 July 1854 (Letters of ALT, ii. 94).	Edmund Lushington	sister
2) 18 July 1855 (Ibid., ii. 114).	Lewis Fytche	father
3) 14 Aug. 1855 (Ibid., ii. 123).	Edmund Lushington	brother

4) 1 Sep. 1860 Sir John Simeon wife
(Ibid., ii. 264).

5) 12 Mar. 1861 Duchess of Argyll father
(Ibid., ii. 272).

6) c. 23 Dec. 1861 Princess Alice father
(Ibid., ii. 289-90)
(draft; no formal start).

7) 12 Jan. 1869 Vicountess Strangford husband
(Ibid., ii. 512).
(no formal start).

8) 2 May 1870 Lord Boyne, via Ellen Bunbury, on the
(Ibid., ii. 548). death of the Viscountess Boyne.

9) 26 June 1871 Sophia Elmhirst son
(Ibid., iii. 6).

10) 28 Apr. 1872 Fredrick Locker wife
(Ibid., iii. 30).
(no formal start).

11) 6 Mar. 1874 Lord Houghton wife
(Ibid., iii. 73).

12) 18 July 1874 Mrs Jane Brookfield husband
(Ibid., iii. 82).

13) 3 Dec. 1878 George Eliot husband
(Ibid., iii. 166).

14) Aug. 1883 Queen Victoria friend & companion,
(Ibid., iii. 250-1). John Brown.

15) 25 Jan. 1884 Frederick Tennyson wife
(Ibid., iii. 279: incomplete).

16) 1 Apr. 1884 Queen Victoria son
(Ibid., iii. 287).
(no formal start).

17) 16 Mar. 1886 Benjamin Neeve Peach father
(Ibid., iii. 334).
(no formal start).

18) c. 20 June 1888 Queen Victoria son-in-law
(Ibid., iii. 369: draft).

19) 12 Dec. 1889 Robert Browning ('Pen') father
(Ibid., iii. 408: telegram).
(no formal start).

20) 7 July 1891 William Gladstone son
(Ibid., iii. 426).

21) 30 Jan. 1892 Queen Victoria grandson
(Ibid., iii. 438).

The following list presents further information on these deaths, and attempts to present these letters in the context of other bereavements suffered by Tennyson (here ATLC, followed by a number, refers to the letters of condolence given above.)

16 Mar. 1831: father, George Clayton, aged fifty-six..

24 Aug. 1832: Cambridge friend, Edward Spedding.

4 July 1835: grandfather, George, aged eighty-five.

20 Apr. 1851: first son, stillborn. Tennyson did not wish to have a record of it in any newspaper. It finds no record in any letter of condolence either.

26 July 1854: ATLC, 1: to his brother-in-law, Edmund Lushington, on the death of his sister. Lushington had been friends with Tennyson at Cambridge. In 1842, he married Tennyson's sister, Cecilia, (it is this marriage which is celebrated in the Epilogue of *In Memoriam*).

18 July 1855: ATLC, 2: to his cousin, Lewis Fytche, on the death of Fytche's father.

14 Aug. 1855: ATLC, 3: to Edmund Lushington, on the death of his brother, Henry. Tennyson said that Henry Lushington was 'a man of great intellect and genius'. He was 'a very dear friend of mine'.

2 June 1858: publisher, Edward Moxon, with whom Tennyson had had a friendly connection since 1829.

? 1859: 'the sudden death of Henry Hallam was a great grief..., for the historian had been a good friend through thirty years. On hearing of Mr Hallam's last days he [Tennyson] read some *In Memoriam* aloud and dwelt on those passages which most moved him. Generally when he was asked to read the poem he would refuse, saying "It breaks me down, I cannot"'.[1]

1 Sep. 1860: ATLC, 4: to his friend Sir John Simeon, on the death of his wife.

? 1861: his uncle, Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt.

12 Mar. 1861: ATLC, 5: to the Duchess of Argyll, on the death of her father, the Duke of Sutherland. Tennyson had met the Duke in 1850. The Duchess often asked Tennyson to Argyll Lodge, where he read to her and her guests. In 1857 the Tennysons stayed with the Argylls at their home, Inverary Castle. The Duke and the Duchess often visited the Tennysons at Farringford.

June 1861: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, aged fifty-five.

Sept. 1861: Arthur H. Clough, a visitor to Farringford for six weeks in March 1861. Clough spent some time with the Tennysons in France.

23 Dec. 1861: ATLC, 6: draft of a letter to Princess Alice on the death of her father, Prince Albert. Out of all of Tennyson's letters of condolence, this is the only one which makes any reference to Arthur Hallam or *In Memoriam*.

21 Feb. 1865: mother, Elizabeth, aged eighty-seven. 'This will be a great shock to him,' Emily Tennyson recorded in her private journal.[2] In a letter dated 19 April 1865, she told Edward Lear, 'These sad losses have been a sad break in his life. He is not yet as he was before'.[3]

May 1865: death of his good friend Stephen Spring Rice, whom Tennyson had first met at Cambridge.

10 Aug. 1866: brother, Septimus, aged fifty-one.

12 Jan. 1869: ATLC, 7: to the Vicountess Strangford on the death of her husband.

2 May 1870: ATLC, 8: to his cousin, Ellen Bunbury, on the death of Tennyson's cousin, Emma Russell, the Vicountess Boyne.

21 May 1870: 'the terrible blow of Sir John Simeon's death...[a] much loved and ever honoured friend'.[4] They had first met in 1854. In her private journal two weeks after Simeon's death, Emily Tennyson noted that 'he [Alfred Tennyson] is very sad. His loss haunts him'.[5]

26 June 1871: ATLC, 9: to his friend from childhood, Sophy Elmhirst nee Rawnsley, on the death of her son.

28 Apr. 1872: ATLC, 10: to his friend, Frederick Locker, on the death of his wife. In 1868 Tennyson and Locker had travelled to France, and in 1869, to Switzerland. In 1870 Lady Charlotte Locker had furnished and stocked the Tennysons' small London pied-a-terre, taken in part out of a desire to be nearer to the Lockers..

6 Mar. 1874: ATLC, 11: to his Cambridge friend, Lord Houghton, formerly Richard Monckton Milnes, on the death of his wife.

12 July 1874: his old friend from Cambridge, the Reverend W. H. Brookfield.

18 July 1874: ATLC, 12: Tennyson wrote a letter of condolence to Brookfield's widow.

3 Dec. 1878: ATLC, 13: to George Eliot, on the death of George Lewes. Both lived near to the Tennysons' home in Haslemere, and each paid the other quite frequent visits.

25 Apr. 1879: his favourite brother, Charles (Tennyson) Turner, aged seventy-one.

? 1879: his former neighbour and keen photographer, Mrs Cameron.

1880: George Eliot.

1881: Thomas Carlyle, a friend since 1838.
Dean Stanley

Mar. 1881: James Spedding, referred to by Hallam Tennyson as 'one of my father's oldest and most intimate friends... his loss was deeply mourned.'[6] They had first met at Cambridge but had not seen each other since 1864.

6 July 1882: W. G. Ward, Tennyson's neighbour at Freshwater, with whom he often walked, discussing Roman Catholicism.

14 June 1883: his 'old and valued friend', Edward FitzGerald, whom he had first become acquainted with in 1835.[7] When the two had last met in 1876, they had not seen one another for twenty years.

Aug. 1883: ATLC, 14: to Queen Victoria on the death of her companion, John Brown.

25 Jan. 1884: ATLC, 15: to his brother, Frederick, on the death of his wife. In this letter, Tennyson made reference to his recent bereavements: 'Neither you nor I can have long to wait before we join those whom we have lost'.

1 Apr. 1884: ATLC, 16: to Queen Victoria, on the death of her youngest son, Leopold, aged thirty-one.

1884: sister, Mary, aged seventy-four.

16 Mar. 1886: ATLC, 17: to Benjamin Peach, on the death of his father, Charles, whom Tennyson had met and admired on his visit to Cornwall in 1848.

20 Apr. 1886: third son, Lionel, died as he was returning from India, aged thirty-two. 'The thought of Lionel tears me to pieces — he was so full of promise & so young'.[8] R. Martin notes that this bereavement revived Tennyson's interest in spiritualism, and that he attended a seance at which he asked to speak to 'my dead son Lionel'.[9]

20 June 1888: ATLC, 18: draft of his letter to Queen Victoria, on the death of her son-in-law.

1889: his sister, Emily, aged seventy-eight.

Nov. 1889: friend, the poet and essayist, William Allingham, whom Tennyson had first met in 1851. Tennyson often repeated Allingham's last words 'I am seeing things that you know nothing of'.[10]

12 Dec. 1889: ATLC, 19: to Robert Barrett Browning, on the death of his father, Robert Browning. Browning and Tennyson had first met in 1841. Tennyson was greatly distressed by his death.

1890: brother, Edward, aged seventy-seven.

7 July 1891: ATLC, 20: letter to his old friend William Gladstone, on the death of his eldest son.

30 Jan. 1892: ATLC, 21: to Queen Victoria on the death of her grandson.

Tennyson was one of eight brothers (one of whom died in childhood, two died while Tennyson was still alive) and four sisters (two of whom died while Tennyson was still alive). Though not a particularlty gregarious man, his fame, like Dickens', meant that his circle of friends and acquaintances was large.

Many of Tennyson's poems were occasioned by the death of friends. (In the following list of poems written on the death of friends, the date of composition is given, followed by its date of publication).

Apart from *In Memoriam*, the death of Hallam prompted *Tithonus* (1833; 1860), *Ulysses* (20 Oct. 1833; 1842), *Break, break, break* (?spring 1834; 1842), *Tears, Idle Tears* (1842) and *In the Valley of the Cauterez* (Sep. 1861; 1864).

After the death of Edward Spedding, Tennyson wrote *To J. S.* (end of Oct. 1832; 1832).

While at the funeral of Sir John Simeon, he wrote *In the Garden at Swainston* (31 May 1870; 1874).

To the Rev. W. H. Brookfield (pubd. July 1875).

The death of Tennyson's s brother, Charles (Tennyson) Turner, is commemorated in *Prefatory Poem to My Brother's Sonnets* (30 June 1879; 1880) and *'Frater Ave atque Vale'* (June 1880; 1883).

To E. FitzGerald (June 1883, before FitzGerald's death; 1885)

The Dead Prophet (1882-4; 1885), in memory of Carlyle.

In Memoriam William George Ward, (1885: May 1889).

When Lionel Tennyson died, Tennyson wrote *To the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava* (?1889: 1889).

These can be set alongside the poems which Tennyson wrote to commemorate the death of national figures (all subsequent dates given are those of the poem's first date of publication):

Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington (1852)

Dedication (To the *Idylls of the King*, 1862, written in memory of the Prince Consort. See ATLC, 6).

The Death of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale (1892; the Queen's grandson. See ATLC, 21).

The Charge of the Light Brigade (1854) might also come into this category.

APPENDIX C

LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE TO HENRY HALLAM
IN CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE LIBRARY, OXFORD

FROM WILLIAM STUART ROSE (1775-1843. Poet and reading clerk of House of Lords).

3 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 6, letter no. 110)

My dear Hallam

Sturges Bourne has just communicated the heavy affliction you have had to endure, adding the only consolatory circumstance which can alleviate the regret of your wellwishers, namely that you & Mrs Hallam are said to have bourne up courageously under the blow. I am well aware that my writing to you (which can have no immediately good effect) may for the moment irritate; but I had rather that you were now vext at my intrusion, than pained by the after thought of an old & professedly attached friend having shown no sympathy in your distress. I return home on Saturday the fifth. I have found my poor mother little (if at all) changed; but contemplating death more closely than before: She fortunately does not fear it. I wish it were so with others. For the Provost[?] (who speaks of Lady H. as in an alarming state of health) speaks fearfully of her terrors. I have received kindness enough from her to make me feel for her more than I usually feel for such persons. God bless you & yours — & you have many to bless in — my dear Hallam. Believe me your obliged and faithful

W. S. Rose

FROM WILLIAM STUART ROSE, NO DATE
(vol. 6, letter no. 114).

The tone of your last letter (however sorrowful) is so comfortable that I have burnt a long letter which I was writing to you, under the conviction that you had anticipated all that I could suggest; that the foundations of future peace was laid, & that Time & Occupation only would do the rest. Ld. Holland, who writes to me about you, (but who says he has now already written to yourself) strongly insists upon the last. This you have (I rejoice to find it) returned; & this encourages me to claim your promise of signing letters of Attorney, on the Torzi's[?] behalf, who is so

much afflicted by our loss that she has desired me to leave room enough for her to say at least how deeply she sympathizes with you as a parent. One thing more only I will add upon this painful subject because, if I am right, it carries with it some sort of comfort, however dreary. I do not imagine that anything could have saved poor Arthur, even if some defective organization had not rendered him more defenceless than others. The mode of his suffering & death is common in Italy, & (I believe) generally irremediable. There, an intermittent fever, even when slight, often changes to apoplexy, & ends in death. This change of form in the disease is designated by the epithet of perniciosa. Poor Arthur's state of brain may have rendered him doubly obnoxious to its consequences &, had he lived might possibly have rendered him obnoxious to evils worse than death. May God bless & comfort you, dear Hallam! WSR

[There follows ten lines in Italian from Torzi(?), and a N. B. from Rose with regard to 'the letters of Attorney']

Fazakerley[?] who is here & furnishes me with a frank, charges me with all good wishes to you. Rogers has also written to me a letter full of kind interest respecting you. W. S. R

FROM LORD HENRY HOLLAND, 4 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 172)

Dear Hallam —

I know too well by experience how much easier it is to gratify oneself by expressing what one feels at the misfortunes of a friend than to soothe him by suggesting any thing to relieve his affliction & am therefore most ashamed in breaking in upon your grief with any enquiries or attempts at condolences & consolation. Lady H^{d} however & myself have some selfish desire that you should know how deeply we have felt for you on this dreadful loss that you have sustained & to express a hope that your health at least should not have suffered & that it enable you to resume those habits of study & employment which no man has greater inducements or facility in prosecuting[?] with advantage than yourself & which I believe are the surest resource we can have as we advance in life against the calamities & distress, to which though we never foresee or expect them we are always exposed in the proportion in which we enjoy any advantage or happiness —

Pray excuse me for molesting you and attribute it to this real cause

the sincere regard
with which I am
most truly yrs
Lord Holland

FROM WILLIAM SOUTHEBY (1757-1833), 5 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 8, letter no. 21)

My Dear Hallam,

A circuitous letter from the Forest which has just reached me at Cheltenham, has deeply deeply afflicted me with your inconsolable calamity; inconsolable by all that earth can administer. If sympathy of those who love & esteem you, could render grief less poignant, you would less suffer. Your manly mind will buoy itself up to sustain the poor Mother, and no distress can ever eraze from your thought the sole soothing reflection that the unswerving discharge of the Father's duties had trained up your son for that state of bliss now the residence of his pure spirit.
Write me one line to A. T[...]ed [illegible], Ecton near Northampton... Harriet & myself are returning to the Forest after a five weeks tour thro N. Wales

Ever
most affectn.
W Sotheby

FROM CHARLES PEERS, 11 OCTOBER 1833
(vol 4. no. 83)

My Dear Friend,

You may easily imagine our astonishment, & I trust you will conceive our regret, at the statement which appeared in your newspaper obituary of the calamity which you have sustained — alone too & afar in a foreign land, with a solitary journey perhaps of many hundred of miles before you — & with the trying task of communicating to those who were looking forward with hope & pleasure to a speedy & joyful meeting! Were it not that the statement seemed so exact as to the names of residence, I could not have supposed that it originated in some unaccountable mistake — for the wax could scarcely have been cold on your letter which we had read with so much interest, when this terrible blow fell upon you! Not a word in your letter of his illness, or of any circumstance respecting him that could create anxiety! "Very suddenly on the 15th at Vienna" (the very day on which you had dated) is all that appears, & of course makes me more particularly anxious for details when your feelings will allow you to communicate them to one than whom none of your friends will feel sorrow more deeply for your affliction. I find it difficult entirely to supress strange & probably most confounded conjectures, which however occasionally crosses my mind. _ Accident would have been mentioned & might this be the consequence of some hostile meeting? Warm romantic feelings (of which I recollect a remarkable instance in a political enterprize) might possibly meet some excitement to rouse national jealousy & call forth a scene of national horror in a country where young & fiery spirits indulge so freely in political discussions. — The circumstances

to which I have alluded (which you afterwards communicated to me in confidence) as it might have exposed him to imminent peril, showed a feeling & spirit which I had scarcely suspected in a youth apparently of gentle characters & manners, and so highly distinguished for literary attainments. With this crude suspicion floating in my mind (as to a hostile meeting) the cause above suggests itself as the most natural, but whatever the cause or the actual fact, the stroke is & must be the heaviest you & yours have ever encountered — for as was said by a celebrated father on the loss of an only son "the loss of a finished man in times like these is not easily supplied" — In such trials as these to a dear friend, one feels that the attempt to point out any matter of consolation is hopeless — one cannot but fancy what such powers of mind might have produced "Si quai fata assera!" — but reflect on the other hand, that much might have been [in] store to blight your hopes, & cloud his projects — that "sickness of the heart which rises from hope deferred" might long have been his portion — but beyond all other considerations it would be superfluous to remind you that we are in life & death in the hands of a Power who claims all for good, & appoints our sorrows who orders [word missing, paper torn] means of drawing us nearer to himself, as the [word missing, paper torn]

Let me beg of you to let me know at least what measures you took as to the disposal of his remains, & how you accomplished your journey, as I conclude you turned towards home with all practicable expedition.

Mrs Peers likewise begs you will accept & offer to Mrs Hallam & your family her sincerest sympathy (indeed the article immediately drew tears from her) & believe me [sic] with me, with the same feeling towards you all. Ever affectionately Yours

Charles Peers

Let me know how Mrs Hallam bears up under the shock, and what you are going to do this winter — am I likely to see you if I go up to Town as usual at the latter end of this month?

FROM LORD HENRY HOLLAND, 12 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 174)

My dear Hallam,

Your letter, which I received at Rhents[?]ford, was very affecting to me; yet welcome at the same time, in giving me assurance that one great trial had been surmounted, & yet more, in describing to me that pious[?] feeling connected with the whole event, which is the best security for the future. — In the many dispensations of affliction which are spread over the lives of us all, I know not of any feeling so likely to give stable comfort as the humility of resignation; for that there is a Providence of God, under which we all live, & in which we all partake, in way [sic] mysterious to ourselves, but working for good and, I firmly believe. And in reflecting on these matters, as we must all do, I have often found much more consolation in an entire conviction of ignorance, & inability to gain present knowledge, than I could have done from any opinions partially understood, or believed. —

I never desire to go deeper into the question as to the origin of Evil, than in gaining conviction, that it has relation to a scheme of Providence, which worked for eventual good. — I believe too that we may meet again in some condition of existence, where these things are better understood.

I know not, however, my dear Hallam, that I am giving any thing of comfort by these considerations; & I write them only as what have before occurred to my mind in connection with these painful accounts of life. — Regarding the circumstances which attend the event we now deplore (for I cannot ... my feelings in some degree with yours & Mrs Hallam) further relexion has not altered the opinion I gave you here. I will not recur [?] to that point further, unless any questions should occur to yourself, which there could be satisfaction to you in having an answer upon.

It would be very gratifying to me to hear from you again, at any such time as you may be inclined to write; as I am anxious to have further accounts of Mrs Hallam, & your family after this lapse of time since your return to Home[?] __ But do not write sooner, or at further length, than suit your feeling at the time. I know well that there ought to be no exertion is such cases.

If there is anything service I can do for you here, or in any way, I trust you will let me know it.

Preserve your friendship for me, my dear Hallam. Without romantic notions on this subject, I know & feel that mark of happiness gained [?] to life — not perhaps to the period past that of youth, — by maintaining & strengthening these attachments.

Farewell for the present, Pray remember me affect^y to M^rs Hallam, & your Children; — & also to Miss Hallam.

Ever yours affectionately, my dear Hallam.

H. Holland.

FROM LADY JANE DAVY (1780-1855. Wife of Sir Humphry Davy).
15 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 176)

I only last week heard my dear M^r Hallam that sorrow had afflicted you; & that the incidental mentioning of it, gave me no certain information of its nature, or extent. I wrote immediately to M^r Fazakerlay[?]; & his reply yesterday gives me unfeigned & deep concern. To comfort you in such a severe affliction, even wisest & nearest friends must [illegible] an unavailing endeavour at this time; yet even in the hardest trials, there is some faint interest in the sincere sympathy of those, we think knew what is mourned, & feel regard for what is left. You are not so bereaved, as to be without blessings still around you, & indeed [illegible] in the magnitude of your affliction, may still from their source derive belief in as far as grieving over worth & superiority universally allowed, is less dreadful, than in such a [illegible] to have cause to miss life with grief, any conflicting [illegible] I can offer you faithfully, I enter fully, nay tenderly with the distress of yourself & your family, & it would be kind if you can make the effort to let me hear of M^rs Hallam's health & your own state of mental power. I was requested by Fazakerlay[?] to convey if I wrote to you, how truly his sympathy & kindness were awakened

towards you, & how much he, as well as others, knowing the cause of your natural grief, felt it was indeed but just to buried hopes & promising Genius. You may even in your distress, like to hear I am very well, having been wandering over beautiful scenery in the North of Devon [news of this journey continues for four lines] Pray remember me to Mr= Hallam & your younger circle & believe me with sincere regard & [illegible] interest

Very Truly Yours

Lady Jane Davy

FROM LADY MARIA CALLCOTT (1785-1842. Published descriptions of her surroundings in India, Brazil, Chili, Italy, also *Little Arthur's History of England* in 1835)

15 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 1, letter no. 176)

My dear dear Mr Hallam

It has been with great difficulty that I have refrained from writing to you before. You cannot want to be told of our deep sympathy nor of many a tear shed over a young creature, so worthy of regard, inspiring such hope! & many more for those who have to mourn him especially when offering up the prayers belonging to one, whose life is measured. To talk of the consolations to be drawn from any source but one must now & for a long time be idle, to suppose it needful to tell Christians that we mourn not as those without hope as vain — Yet it is mercifully appointed that time shall bring comfort for all earthly affliction & that Hope becomes faith, as we rely more & more on the promises that lead us to look for a blessed reunion hereafter with those we have loved on earth. Will any member of your household take the trouble to let me hear how you all are in health __ Dear Ellen has been much in my thoughts __ Her first severe suffering & such a one! If I judge her rightly however, her best comfort will be that she may give you & her mother a still more dutiful & pious affection now in this hour of sorrow. I dare hardly think of Mrs Hallam & of her grief of that noble & excellent heart. I can only pray as I have done for you all. I hope your sister is with you.

Your truly affectionate friend

Maria Callcott

FROM SIR JOHN BERNARD BOSANQUET (1773-1847. Privy councillor).

21 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 178)

My dear Hallam

Though I do not know when to address a letter to you, & though I cannot hope to offer to you any consolation under your present affliction, I cannot forbear to send a few lines to you here to express my unfeigned sorrow for the grievous calamity which has befallen yourself & Mr^s^ Hallam. If the sympathy of friends can avail any thing I am sure that you have full measure. None of them can have witnessed your tenderness & solicitude without entering in some degree into the feelings with which the untimely loss of their expected friend is attended. Under afflictions such as these, those who have experienced grief for the loss of a beloved object will not advise a premature attempt to divert the mind from the cause of its distress. Time must be allowed to administer its healing balm. Accept my Dear friend the sincere expression of my regret, & have the kindness of the proper [illegible] & communicate to Mr^s^ Hallam how deeply I feel for her distress.

Ever yours truly from
J. B. Bosanquet.

FROM WILLIAM STUART ROSE, 22 OCTOBER 1833
(vol. 6, letter no. 117)

My dear Hallam

I am much distressed at having offered an evil ground of consolation; but do not think that I have been rightly understood. I conceived indeed ague to have produced apoplexy, but the state of the brain (as described by Holland) to have rendered poor Arthur incapable of struggling with apoplexy or indeed a thousand other evils & accidents incidental to life. Nay; I conceived that he had probably been saved from something 'worse than death' & think I must have said so; because I had in my mind a letter of poor Beattie's upon the loss of a beloved child, who might probably have been obnoxious to the calamity, to which I allude. When I wrote to common friends upon the subject of your sad affliction, I told each that I had only a general commission from your brother-in-law to write to common friends, & that I exercised my own discretion in the execution of it. I much regret having so strangely forgotten Peers but had I not I could not have communicated with him, from having lost a memorandum of his present post-town. In consequence of this Spring directed a letter to him at The Travellers' Club, which Bartle Frere[?] found lying there four months afterwards. He, as well as George, (who are both here) are constant in their enquiries about you. I this morning also received a most feeling letter about you from that kind-hearted woman, Lady Davy, who has written to you. The Torzi[?] is pleased that you have taken her message in good part, & enquires every morning if I have heard from you.

[There follows 20 lines about the health of his companions, his agreement respecting Hallam's plans to remove to Clifton]

I do not know whether I told you that I have had most kind enquiries about you from Mr^s^ Ord[?]. There is (I think) one

source of consolation, though it cannot be at the present moment be prized as it deserves to be, to which I cannot be wrong in directing your attention; namely, the strong interest which your friends have taken in your cruel loss & their anxiety to know how you have born it. With my best wishes to Mrs Hallam & all belonging to you, believe very affectionately yours

W. S. Rose

FROM RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES (first Baron Houghton, 1809-85).

4 NOVEMBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 180)

My dear Sir

I hardly know whether I am not following a blind feeling against my better judgement, I cannot clearly represent to myself by what right I intrude upon the solitude of your sorrow, but yet I find it impossible to let many days go by, after my arrival in England, without some expression of my own personal grief and close sympathy with yours, at the fearful shock which your most sacred love and my friendship has sustained. __ When I tell you that the chief impulse which has now brought me to England, was the prospect of renewing and tightening my intimacy with your dear Son, that I had looked forward to his kind looks and kind words of greeting, almost every night for many months past, that the short pause which distance and different employment had made in our correspondence had only seemed to give to the delightful hope of seeing him again, a certain zest of curiosity, and had not diminished one tittle[?] the strength of my love, — all these things, though they may seem and though they are as nothings to the depth of your desolation, may yet give some authority for approaching those solemn recesses, with a comparatively unfamiliar hand.

I hear the funeral is to take place in Town — will you permit me to attend it ? I do not indeed want any such presence to make me conscious of the loss I have undergone, but I would wish my outward actions to bear testimony to the truth of my emotions.

If the affliction of your family will permit the mention of a name which has no other to claim to their remembrance than the love of him they deplore, will you Sir speak to them of my sympathy. — It would be a stange anomaly for me to talk to them or to you of consolation. — <u>that</u> can only come from something at once within us and above us, from our own Faith and our own wisdom — and there, I doubt not that you have found it.

I am going out of town for a week — and shall then return to remain till I can have performed the last act of reverential affection to my beloved Friend.

I feel more bold than when I began this letter — I am sure you will understand and pardon it.

I am
my dear Sir

y^r^ obed. and obliged
Rich^d^ M. Milnes

FROM JAMES MILNES GASKELL , 5 NOVEMBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 182)

My dear Mr Hallam.

If I did not think it possible that you might ascribe my silence to a wrong cause, I should not own this wish of adding to your grief by reminding you how deeply I share in it. Though dear Arthur's loss is irreparable, and though the affliction of those who loved him best cannot moderate yours, yet the expression of their sorrow and sympathy is due to the friend they have lost. When I think of the heavings of your affliction, I am almost ashamed to dwell upon my own, but God knows it is not because I bear it lightly,. The place which he had in my heart can never be refilled. The happiest associations of my life were inseparably connected with him, and I had looked forward with delight to opportunities of future intercourse. God has ordered it otherwise, and has been pleased to take him to himself, and dear Arthur has exchanged what must have been a career of brilliant usefulness in this world for pure and lasting happiness in the next. I pray God that the remembrance of those noble qualities which most endeared him to us, and the full assurance of his present happiness may console and comfort you under this trying dispensation. With every affectionate remembrance to M^rs^ Hallam & to Ellen,

Believe me, ever,
Your attached & faithful servant
J. Milnes Gaskell

FROM CHARLES PEERS, 5 NOVEMBER 1833
(vol. 4, letter no. 85)

My dear Hallam

I have been much disappointed at not meeting with you during my short stay in Town, though our interview would have been a melancholy one; yet I should have like to see you; Time indeed can alone soften down such sorrow as yours & I sincerely hope you will feel its mellowing operation however you may now feel the future overcast. The shorter our own remaining time, the less we have to feel the value of perishable pleasures, at least the less time we have left to regret them. Do not suppose (as might be inferred from an expression in your letter) that I suspected you of failing in due resignation under such a trial, still less would I have you feel hurt or offended at the suggestion which I unguardedly threw out, & which only occurred to me in consequence of your writing on the same day, omitting any mention of his being

unwell. I called at your house, & was much pleased with the interest & attachment to you & yours by a female servant who admitted me — She said she had missed[?] him, & seemed to feel almost as for a son of her own. I will dwell no more however on this painful subject, and if I have done it too much already, it is because it has dwelt upon my mind — I see the death of one of our contemporaries announced in the newspaper — poor Crooke

[There follows 12 lines about Crooke, and Peers' return to town]

Let me hear again when you feel at all inclined to write, & remember me most kindly to Mrs Hallam & your sister & daughter

Ever affectionately yours
Charles Peers

FROM WILLIAM STEWART ROSE, 6 NOVEMBER 1833
(vol. 6, letter no. 119)

My dear Hallam

I am persuaded from the tone of Lord Landsdowne's & Whishaw's letters to me upon the painful subject of your loss, that they have been restrained from writing to you from the apprehension of intruding upon your sorrows. For Herbert's strangeness; I can offer little explanation,

[There follows 42 lines of Rose's news]

FROM FRANCIS DOYLE (1810-88. Poet).
11 NOVEMBER 1833
(vol. 15, letter no. 185)

My Dear Sir

I have not written to you before because I was afraid of appearing intrusive and officious but I find it impossible to refrain any longer from espressing to you how deeply I have sympathized with the sorrows of your family on thus finding so admirable and excellent a being as my dear friend Arthur suddenly torn from amongst you. It is easy for all those who united in regarding him with feelings of affection and pride, not only as a beloved friend abounding in all those amiable qualities which excite and retain attachment, but who as a creature of glorious promise who could not have failed to [illegible] and benefit mankind, to picture to themselves how bitter must have been the grief of parents and other relations under so heavy a dispensation — his early friends especially who have grown up with and seen his character unfold itself, who have acknowledged the superiority of his talents, not with jealousy, but with a feeling of affectionate confidence that it was impossible for any [illegible] of mind[?] to be abused and or wasted by a dispensation such as this, can imagine with what anxious fondness a father must have watched over such a loss. I am aware how feeble and misplaced every thing which looks like an attempted

consolation must be. Still however it cannot but afford you a melancholy satisfaction to know that if Dear Arthur has been snatched away in the season of youthful promise, he was at least by all his numerous friends appreciated, and loved as he deserved, his death has left a void in all our hearts. We look in vain for another to realize the expectations which he had excited, and to supply in our affections of the place which he had filled the knowledge of his present happiness must be cherished as our only consolation. I should be glad to hear that some of your family have suffered [illegible] in health under their most severe affliction

Believe me
Dear Mr Hallam
most sincerely and faithfully yrs
Francis H. Doyle.

FROM R. J. TENNANT, NO DATE
(vol. 15, letter no. 19)

My dear Sir

I return you the papers with my thanks — it has given me great satisfaction to read them again. The no. volumes I will with your permission keep a little longer. I have enclosed a sonnet which I find in my possession. From the tone of thought it was evidently written some time ago, but it seems not inferior to his other compositions.

It would of course give me great pleasure to be able to assist in preserving the memory of one who was perhaps the dearest friend I am ever likely to know: if I should find any more of his writing among his papers you shall immediately have it.

There ought to be Essays (unless they have been destroyed) — on the argument for an intelligent first Cause deduced from the phenomena of the Universe — 2 On repose in works of Art — 3 On the Theory wh derives the Moral Intention from Association 4 On the advancement of the Philosophy of Moral Sentiments by the [illegible] & Epicureans respectively.

Of the 1st and 3rd some fragments seem to exist in these papers.

I have copies of several little poems but none I think which are not to be found in a little red book that you have.

Some of the Sonnets from the Vita Nuova appear quite worthy of being printed: I remember on reading them with him some time ago we agreed that many required considerable alteration. The Rafaella & Fiammetta was a piece I thought among his best. A few lines addressed to his sister seems well worthy to be joined with a similar poem in the printed vol. wh is I believe a very general favourite.

Among his Metaphysical papers there are some fragmentary remarks on Causation which I should be sorry to find neglected. On Metaphysical subjects we seldom agreed — the Theodicaea was a point of frequent discussion — but as highly characteristic of him and as a beautiful mythology I always admired it. Fred. Tennyson wrote to me yesterday & seems to regret that the Theodicaea is not included in the list of those wh. you intend printing.

I am afraid not much of his correspondence of a general nature is preserved — his letters to me are wholly or almost wholly relating to private contemporary circumstances my own and his. —

I am

very truly yours

R. J. Tennant

FROM J. M. HEATH, 1834.
(vol. 15, letter no. 189)

Dear Mr Hallam

Having myself been here for some time, & my family having been in the country, I have only just heard that you have sent me a copy of the Engraving of Arthur's Bust, and that you have one or two still undisposed of. I return you many thanks for the gift of a memento which will recall sorrowful but still blissful memories in me as long as I live.

If your remaining copies are still at liberty I would venture to request one for Edmund Lushington. I know that it will be much valued by him.

By some accident he never got a copy of the "Remains", though I believe that one was intended for him, and I have often heard him express great anxiety to recover it as possible. Pray remember me to all your family &

Believe me
dear Mr Hallam
Yours very sincerely
J. M. Heath

FROM JOHN MITCHELL KEMBLE (1807-57. Philologist and historian).
? 1834
(vol. 15, letter no. 191)

My dear Sir

I sit down with a full heart to thank you for your book, altho' it recals [sic] too painfully the friend we have lost, and the hours of an intercourse which since he has now ceased to take a part in it, has always seemed to want something. I have long wished to write to you, but what could I have said? Even the duty of sending home these volumes which belonged to him, I delayed till I felt quite afraid and ashamed of seeing them. The high and holy character of Arthur's mind, will long be felt in the effects which it has produced on others: no man that knew him scan ever forget what he was, or the hopes which we entertained of what he would be. Gentle and kindly, so as to be universally beloved, there yet was never a more earnest or determined spirit, in every case where right could be defended and wrong exposed: yet during the whole of his Cambridge career, when in the habits of passing whole days in the company of his chosen companions, and entering upon discussions wherein perhaps no two persons in the party had the same opinion, I know that he never either gave or received a moment's uneasiness, nor was there a man for whom all of us would with such reading have undertaken any labour that could be of service.

How miserably little this seems to say of my excellent and nobleminded friend: and yet saying even this now in some degree takes off the oppressive desire which I had, in some way to hear testimony to his greatness, & to the love I bore him. He was the

companion, and the encourager of my studies: our favourite authors were the same, and more than one happy month was spent by us in devouring the pages of old English poets. Chaucer I need hardly tell you was a great favourite with him: but there were difficulties in the language which stood in the way of his perfect enjoyment. The great delight was to be found in some of the older Dramatists, more especially in Decker & Heywood, whom his tenderness of feeling naturally recommended to him. It was on the same account that whenever he could translate any poems of Goethe or Schiller, or hear them translated, he gave the preference to Schiller. Peace be with him! The dearest & most beloved beings that exist without the circle of my own home, were with one exception, the most dearly beloved by him. They as I, feel that one blow has been given to us which we can never hope to heal.

Among the books which I send, is one that was left behind in Germany, & since brought over by a lady, who put it into my hands.

I am, Dear Sir, your sincerely attached & faithful Servant
John Kemble.

Pray present my respects to Mrs. Hallam.

FROM JAMES SPEDDING (1808-81. Editor of Bacon's *Works*).
3 MARCH 1834
(vol. 15, letter no. 203)

My dear Sir

I cannot help writing at once to tell you how deeply I feel your kindness in remembering me at this time, and how anxious I am to do any thing in my power which may in any way serve the memory of Arthur Hallam. If you will allow me a few days I will tell you what I can of him: though I fear I can add little to what you will learn from others with whom he was longer & more closely intimate, and who are better qualified to do justice to his excellence, because their minds were nearer to the level of his — But if what I can do should serve no other end, I, at least, shall be the better for doing it.

His friends at Cambridge have been anxiously considering whether anything could be done which might serve as an adequate memorial of the power w^h^ has passed away from among them: and I know that the step you have resolved on, will be more acceptable to them than any other.

I say nothing to you of my personal grief; lively as I feel it, it must seem weak to yours. That shortly as my friendship with your son has been permitted to last, his memory stands side by side with my Brothers; who has been spared a loss which none would have felt more severely: and if I can dwell calmly upon the remembrance of him it is because I have been accustomed for many years to see those whose friendship made me proud & should have made me better drop away in what seemed the fulness of their promise. This is not my first loss, nor second, nor third —

May I beg you to present my remembrances to M^rs^ Hallam
& to believe me most sincerely
James Spedding

P.S. I should have called on you in London, if I had not known from recent experience that visits of condolence are often anything but consolatory.

FROM W. E. GLADSTONE (1809-98)
23 JUNE 1834
(vol. 15, letter no. 211)

My dear Sir,

Pray accept my warmest thanks for the volume you have transmitted me: it will long I trust be a friend and an instructor; but I will not dwell upon this at any length __ I could not allay your feelings, nor, believe me, express my own.

You have, even while hesitating to use the liberty which truth gave in reference to the beloved subject of your memoir, mentioned me with an undeserved and I fear an exaggerated kindness: in the manner, let me add, of all others most deeply affecting. That you should in any way have placed me in connection with him whom you have lost, by proposing him to me as a model, will ever I hope be an elevating thought, and a sacred incitement to the performance of duty, though [illegible] if I know any thing of myself, it is, that my being is of a humbler order.

Let me thank you also for the additional copy which accompanied those you have given me: it will be my care to transfer it to such person as may be most likely to appreciate the records of that transcendant spirit and to be thankful that of his life, a proportion still remains through your provident affection.

I cannot quit this subject without saying, that you may be fully and effectually consoled by Him who alone is able is my earnest desire and prayer.

With kind remembrances to Mrs Hallam and your daughter.

I remain, my dear Sir
respectfully & most sincerely
Yours

W. E. Gladstone

FROM J. WISHAW, 26 JUNE 1834
(vol. 15, letter no. 213)

My Dear Hallam

On my return home after a short absence, I found your kind & interesting present, for which I return you my best acknowledgements. I prize it very highly, not only as a testimony of our long friendship, but as a memorial of one whom I greatly esteemed, and whom I always considered as one of the most amiable, & in some respects the most accomplished, of all the young men I

have ever known. It is very gratifying to his own & his Father's friends, to possess these reliques of his talents & genius; and the memoir you have given a labour of love & tribute of pious affection, adds greatly to their interest & value. With kindest regards to Mrs Hallam, I remain

Yours most faithfully
J. Wishaw

FROM M. H. CHENEY, 28 JUNE 1834
(vol. 15, letter no. 215)

Dear Mr Hallam

I cannot say how much obliged I feel[?] for the volume you have just sent me.

Everything that relates to the object of your [illegible] care is full of interest to me — & I embrace with melancholy satisfaction the opportunity of studying the workings of a mind "qualem negui c[?]audidiorem L[?]irra tulit"

I never can forget the astonishment & pleasure with which I first saw him in Italy his precocious talents & acquirements and in the enjoyment I have derived from the occasional renewals of an intimacy in this country.

I [illegible] often to recur with eagerness to the hope that in after-life I might have many opportunities of cultivating his friendship (as each succeeding year diminishes the disproportion of our ages) & of receiving improvement from his conversation & example — and that this hope has been blighted must be to me a subject of deep & lasting regret.

If I may without presumption take your gift as a proof that you think me worthy to appreciate your loss & to sympathize with your sorrow, I feel that I have received the most flattering mark of your good opinion & I accept it with pride & gratitude.

With every good wish for you & yours
Believe me dear Mr Hallam
yrs very sincerely
M. H. Cheney

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 In a letter of condolence to George Beadnell, dated 19 December 1839. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. M. House, G. Storey *et al.* (7 vols.; in progress, 1965) [hereafter referred to as Letters of CD], i. 619.

2 see G. Gorer, *Death, Mourning and Bereavement in Contemporary Britain* (1965), 111ff. See also C. M. Parkes, *Bereavement: studies of grief in adult life* (Harmondsworth, 1972, 2nd. edn., 1986), and C. M. Parkes and R. S. Weiss, *Recovery from Bereavement* (New York, 1983).

3 Figures from *The Sunday Telegraph*, 26 February 1989, 14-15.

4 P. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (Harmondsworth, 1983, trans. H. Weaver), 587.

5 For fuller details of these rituals, see R. Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (Harmondsworth, 1988), Chapter I.

6 Letter of condolence to W. Harrison Ainsworth, 17 March 1838, in Letters of CD, i. 384.

7 S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), in *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 vols.; 1966-), trans. J. Strachey, xiv. 245.

8 P. Ariès, op. cit., 580.

9 Cremation was prohibited in England until 1885; today, seventy-five per cent are cremated rather than buried. The standard cremation service takes twenty minutes.

10 I have read The Poems of Tennyson, ed. C. Ricks (1969, 2nd edn. 3 vols., 1987). For the sake of convenience, however, and unless stated otherwise. references are to *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. C. Ricks (1969, 2nd edn., 1989) [hereafter referred to as R.]. For section XVIII of *In Memoriam*, therefore, R, 362.

11 C. Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853, repr. Harmondsworth, 1971), 278.

12 The seven privately-owned London cemeteries are: Kensal Green (1833), Norwood (1838), Highgate (1839), Abney Park (1840), Brompton (1840) and Tower Hamlets (1841).

13 Quoted in S. Weintraub, *Victoria, biography of a Queen* (1987), 314.

14 H. Dyson and C. Tennyson (eds.), *'Dear and Honoured Lady': the Correspondence Between Queen Victoria and Alfred Tennyson* (1969) [hereafter referred to as 'Dear and Honoured Lady'], 69.

15 R, 384-5.

16 At Windsor, Victoria retained two guest books, one for the Queen and one for Prince Albert. Disraeli noted that 'visitors write their names [...] as before — calling on a dead man'. Weintraub, op. cit., 309.

17 Within a week of his father's death in March 1831, Tennyson 'slept in the dead man's bed, earnestly desiring to see a ghost, but no ghost came'. H. Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by his Son* (2 vols.; 1897). For the sake of convenience, and as the single volume edition (1899) is more widely available, all references are to this [hereafter referred to as Memoir], 63.

18 Eric Midwinter, director of the Centre for Policy of Ageing, quoted in *The Sunday Telegraph*, op. cit., 15.

19 In 1852, the Duke of Wellington's funeral car was twenty-one feet long and seventeen feet high. Made of bronze, it weighed nearly eleven tonnes. The Duke's coffin was six feet nine inches long (the Duke was only five feet nine inches). The car got stuck in the mud of Pall Mall. 'It took an hour to transfer the coffin from the funeral car to the bier'. E. Longford, *Victoria R. I.*, (1964), 288.

20 C. M. Parkes and R. S. Weiss, *Recovery from Bereavement* (New York, 1983), 157.

CHAPTER I: WHAT REMAINS

1 *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. C. S. Dessain *et al.* (31 vols.; Oxford, 1961-, in progress) [hereafter referred to as Letters of Newman], v. 249.

2 Memoir, 178.

3 *The Letters of Arthur Henry Hallam*, ed. J. Kolb (Columbus, Ohio, 1981) [hereafter referred to as Kolb], 485.

4 Ibid., 365.

5 Ibid., 456

6 Ibid., 301.

7 *The Remains of Arthur Henry Hallam* (privately printed, 1834; public edn., Boston 1863) [hereafter referred to as Remains], 34.

8 *Theodicaea Novissima* (1833). Although printed in the 1834 edition of *Remains*, the essay does not appear in the 1863 edition. Although Hallam's essay can be found in *The Writings of Arthur Henry Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter, (New York, 1943), because this edition is not widely available, I quote from *Tennyson: 'In Memoriam', A Casebook* (1970), ed. J. Dixon Hunt, 39.

9 Kolb, 217.

10 All references to *Hamlet* given in the text, are to *Hamlet (The Arden Shakespeare)* ed. H. Jenkins (1981).

11 Kolb, 217.

12 Ibid., 221.

Hallam's yearning and straining to recollect the looks and tones of the woman both he and Gaskell had been in love with, a Miss Anna Wintour, is similar to Claude's letter to Eustace, about his love, Mary Trevellyn, in Arthur Clough's *Amours de Voyage*:

> Do whatever I will, I cannot call up her image;
> For when I close my eyes, I see, very likely, St. Peter's,
> Or the Pantheon facade, or Michel Angelo's figures,
> Or, at a wish, when I please, the Alban hills and the Forum, —
> But that face, those eyes, — ah, no, never anything like them;
> Only try as I will, a sort of featureless outline,
> And a pale blank orb, which no recollection will add to.
>
> (Canto V, VIII, in *Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough* (1888), 314).

13 Kolb, 172.

14 Ibid., 263.

15 R., 410-11.

16 Tennyson's rendering of Coventry Patmore's example of '"most high-spirited"' metre, as given in Memoir, 395.

17 Gladstone quoted in *Reminiscences and Opinions of Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, 1813-1885* (1886), 41.

18 Kolb. 179.

19 R., 818, ll. 364-5.

20 A. H. Hallam, *Sonnet to AMW* in *The Writings of A. H. Hallam*, ed. T. H. Vail Motter, (New York, 1943), 35.

21 Kolb, 416.

22 Ibid., 428.

23 Ibid., 547.

24 Ibid., 546.

25 Ibid., 671.

26 Ibid., 773.

27 Ibid., 776.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 779.

30 *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. C. Y. Lang and E. F. Shannon, Jr. (3 vols.; in progress, 1982) [hereafter referred to as Letters of ALT], i. 93.

31 Kolb, 151.

Hallam's letter to Robert Robertson, July 1829: 'About two months ago, I received to my great surprise a letter from the dead letter office which I had sent you at Geneva a long while ago. It appears that you had left Geneva when it arrived and the fool of a postman put on the back "n'est plus," by which, if I had not happened to know of your existence from other sources, I might have supposed you quietly dead and buried.' Kolb, 296.

32 After the death of his friend, Ambrose St John, Newman wrote that he was 'dizzied by my sudden loss'. Letters of Newman, xxvii. 312.

One bereaved contributor to B. Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement: a handbook for the caring professions* (1984), 34, observed that the news of his loss 'was like a great black hole.

33 Letters of condolence to Henry Hallam, on the death of his son, Arthur are in the Hallam family journals in Christ Church College Library, Oxford [hereafter referred to as Christ Church], Christ Church, vol. 4, letter no. 83. Transcriptions of these letters are given in Appendix C.

34 Memoir, 105.

35 Letters of ALT, i. 93.

36 R., 351-2.

37 Letters of ALT, i. 103.

38 Christ Church, vol. 15, letter no. 185.

39 Quoted in Kolb, 8.

40 T. Wemys Reid, *The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes First Lord Houghton* (2 vols.; 1891), 40.

41 Letters of ALT, i. 106.

42 Kolb, 536.

43 Remains, 29.

44 Ibid., 32.

45 Ibid., 29.

46 Ibid., 31.

47 Quoted from Ellen Hallam's private journal in Kolb, 5.

48 Remains, 48.

49 *The Gladstone Diaries*, ed. M. R. D. Foot, (11 vols.; 1968, in progress), ii. 63.

50 Quoted [redacted] in C. Ricks, *Tennyson* (1972, 2nd. edn. 1989), 108.

51 Quoted in Kolb, 5.

52 Ibid., 796.

53 Remains, 13.

54 Ibid., 31.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid. 35.

57 'dazzling fence', ibid., 32; 'how little', ibid, 35.

58 There are least fifteen references to Hallam's 'powers' in Remains.

59 Ibid., 46.

60 Letters of ALT, i. 108.

61 Remains, 40.

62 Letters of ALT, i. 108.

63 Letters of ALT, i. 105.

64 Augustus James, the sexton at Clevedon, recorded by E. Malan, quoted in A. Gatty, *A Key to Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'In Memoriam'* (1881), 25.

65 Ibid.

66 C. M. Parkes, *Bereavement: studies of grief in adult life* (Harmondsworth, 1972, 2nd end., 1986), 85.

67 Letters of ALT, i. 102.

68 Ibid., i. 108.

69 Kolb, 7.

69a Ibid., 8.

70 Kolb, 467.

71 Remains, 51.

72 Letters of AT, i. 107.

73 To preserve Byron's body for the voyage, holes were bored through the tin-lined chest of rough wood which Byron was laid in, and it was placed in a cask containing 180 gallons of spirit. There was also a chest containing the vessels which held the heart, brains and intestines (the jar which held his lungs was deposited in a church at Missolonghi). For this and for the burial of Byron, see L. A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (3 vols.; 1957), iii. 1240-64.

74 Ibid., iii. 1247.

75 Ibid., 1254.

76 Ibid., 1256-7.

77 J. C. Loudon, *On the Laying out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries* (1843) [hereafter referred to as Loudon], 4.

78 Sonnet XXXVI, *Life in Love*, from *The House of Love* (a sonnet-sequence), *The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. W. M. Rossetti (1900), 194.

79 *The Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. O. Doughty and J. R. Wahl (3 vols.; 1965) [hereafter referred to as Letters of DRG], ii. 751.

80 Loudon, 4. Loudon goes on to remark how, by adding quicklime to a corpse, the process of decomposition is accelerated. Quicklime causes a 'solution of the softer parts of the body, which, unless the coffin is watertight [...] oozes out to such an extent that the undertaker's men can scarcely carry the coffin, on account of the flow of matter and the odour'.

81 Letters of DRG, 712.

82 Ibid., 718.

83 Ibid., 735.

84 Ibid., 753.

85 Loudon, 4.

86 Letters of DRG, ii. 751.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., 752.

89 Ibid., 754.

90 Ibid., 759

91 Ibid.

92 Loudon, 14.

93 *The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. W. M. Rossetti (1900), xix.

94 O. Doughty, *A Victorian Romantic: Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1949), 419.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid., 303.

97 Rossetti had told Ford Madox Brown that he had 'often been writing at those poems when Lizzie was ill and suffering, and I might have been attending to her, and now they shall go'.

98 *Nineteenth Century*, xxxiii (1893), 182.

98 Ibid.

99 R., 353-4.

100 T. Wemys Reid, op. cit.

101 Remains, 31.

102 R., 355.

103 Ibid., 358.

104 *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873, repr. Harmondsworth, 1986), 434.

105 Ibid., 435-6.

106 Ibid., 440.

107 Ibid.

108 W. Gladstone, *Gleanings of Past Years* (8 vols., 1879), ii. 137.

109 Letters of ALT, i. 108.

110 R., 401.

111 in the advertisement for the public edition of Remains (1863).

112 R., 475-6.

CHAPTER II: DISSOLUTION

1 H. James, *Views and Reviews* (1865), repr. *Henry James. The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. R. Gard (Harmondsworth, 1987), 50.

2 All references are to *Our Mutual Friend* (1865, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985). All further page numbers are given in the text in brackets.

3 'It is computed that, in all, something like fifteen hundred characters people the works of the great novelist. In *Pickwick Papers* alone it is estimated that there are three hundred and sixty characters'. *The Dickens Companion, ed. J. A. Hammerton (New York, 1910). 50*

4 *Charles Dickens' Book of Memoranda*, transcribed and annotated by F. Kaplan (New York, 1981), entry 92, 19.

5 H. James, op. cit., 52.

6 G. Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1872, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985) [hereafter referred to as Middlemarch], 461.

When Mr Lydgate informs his patient, Mr Causbon, that 'you are suffering from what is called fatty degeneration of the heart [...] Here was a man who now for the first time found himself looking into the eyes of death — who was passing through one of those rare moments when we feel the truth of a commonplace, which is as different from what we call knowing it, as the delirious vision of the water which cannot be had to cool the burning tongue. When the commonplace 'We all must die' transforms itself suddenly into the acute consciousness 'I must die — and soon', the death grapples us, and his fingers are cruel...'

7 H. James, op. cit., 51.

8 Ibid.

9 H. James, *French Poets and Novelists* (1884), 213.

10 L. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford, 1953), 4.

11 Letters of CD, iii. 8.

CHAPTER III: MERE CEREMONY

1 Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (5 vols.; 1871), ii. 59.

2 *From the Raven*, in *Household Words*, 8 June 1850, reprinted in *Collected Papers* (2 vols.; 1937), ii. 248.

3 R. Richardson, op. cit., 272.

4 Ibid.

5 *The Undertakers' & Funeral Directors' Journal and Monumental Masons' Review* [hereafter referred to as Undertakers' Review] can be found in the British Newspaper Library.

6 Advertisements for all these businesses were placed in the Undertakers' Review.

7 *From the Raven*, op. cit., 249.

In March 1887, at 'the AGM of the Funeral and Monumental Reform Association, it was decided that, for the present at least, the Society should cease to exist. R.I.P. The reason given was that many of the members had gone to the Cremation Society.' Undertaker . Review, 22 Mar. 1887.

8 Undertakers' Review, 5 Feb. 1885, 8.

9 At one time, the proprietors of Kensal Green Cemetery proposed (unsuccessfully) to bury up to ten people in graves fifteen feet deep, in order to realise an income of £45,375.

10 From E. Simcox, *Autobiography of a Shirt-maker*, (unpublished, MS Bodleian), quoted in Haight, ix. 248.

11 Letters of ALT, ii. 394.

12 Figures derived from the records of The London Cemetery Company, Highgate Cemetery.

In 1863, Kensal Green Cemetery 'averaged seven [funerals] a day in summer, and eight in winter; sometimes there were more than this', Undertakers' Review, 17 March 1886, 11.

13 F. T. Cansick, *A Collection of Curious and Interesting Epitaphs, copied from the existing Monuments of Distinguished and Notable Characters in The Cemeteries and Churchyards of St. Pancras, Middlesex*, (1872).

At Kensal Green, a similar kind of hydraulic bier was installed: 'This admirable contrivance was invented and executed by Mr Smith, Engineer, Princes Street, Leicester Square, the patentee of an excellent window shutter, and of several other inventions [...] The cost was about 400*l*'. Loudon, 124.

14 *The Builder*, vol. i. 23.

15 Undertakers' Review, July 22 1886, 12.

16 Loudon, 92.

17 J. Hervey, *Meditations Among the Tombs*, (1766), 17.

18 C. Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985), 202.

19 J. Strang, *Necropolis Glasguensis* (1831), 62.

20 *W. Hakewill, Modern Tombs* (1851), 3.

21 Ibid., 1.

William Justyne, in his *Guide to Highgate Cemetery* (1865), hoped to see 'fewer of those monotonous and stereotyped forms of monumental architecture which come from the hands of ignorant stonemasons with only one or two old-fashioned ideas'.

22 Hakewill, 1.

23 Ibid., 4.

24 Ibid., 8.

25 Ibid., 7.

26 Ibid., 8.

28 Letter to the Rev. J. Page Hopps, dated 14 January 1884, in *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. R. Hart-Davis (1962), 168-9. Wilde's letter was printed in *Undertakers' Review*, 20 Jan 1885, 9.

29 A. W. N. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843), 37.

30 Ibid., 12.

31 Other contemporary views of Highgate Cemetery:

'The lower part of the grounds are striking, from their beauty of situation and tasteful arrangement; but the view of the upper plantations, on ascending from the sepulchre, is still more so... The view form this terrace, on a clear day, is extensive and beautiful: the foreground is formed by the cemetery gardens, and the pleasure grounds of the suburban villas, beyond which are seen the spires, domes, and towers of the great metropolis, backed by the sweep of the Surrey hills'.
The Mirror of Art, Literature and Science, No. 912. 290-1.

'The grounds are generally laid out with good taste, though in rather a florid style, and the natural beauties of the situation developed and enhanced by the aid of art...Throughout the grounds, the parterres of sweet-scented flowers, picturesque trees, and clumps of evergreens are scattered in appropriate spots...The view from [the terrace] is remarkably fine, and is alone well worth a visit from the metropolis. The beauties of the place, indeed, appear to be fully appreciated, for the gardens, as we may not inappropriately call the grounds, are daily filled with persons, evidently enjoying the quiet, the pure air, and the splendid landscape'.
The Penny Magazine No. 495, December 21, 1839, 489.

The view from this point is remarkably fine, and is alone worth a visit, some half-dozen counties being visible on a fine day.

The beauties of the place, indeed, appear to be fully appreciated, for the gardens are daily filled with persons evidently enjoying the quiet, the pure air and the splendid landscape.
F. T. Cansick, *A Collection of Curious and Interesting Epitaphs, copied from the existing Monuments of Distinguished and Notable Characters in the Cemeteries and Churches of St. Pancras, Middlesex*, 1872.

'[There are] no prettier suburbs in the environs of London...two prospects may be had... looking to the north, one sees a panorama of pastoral landscape, with here and there bits of forest and clustering villages, so exquisitely beautiful, so serene and complete, so full of repose, that he would scarely suspect that, at the opposite point of the compass, lay the homes, the shops, the factories, the vast paraphernalia of commerce, the magnificient architecture of Church and State, the luxury of wealth, the squalor of poverty, the highest and lowest conditions of life - all the concomitants of a city of nearly six million people'.
C. A. Gillig, *London Guide* 1899.

32 J. C. Loudon disapproved of planting in most cemeteries, because it made them too much like pleasure grounds, rather than as places for contemplative recreation. He advised that there should be no flowers at all, only cypresses and evergreens with naturally dark foliage.

33 A. W. N. Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1843), 12.

34 Ibid.

35 See T. Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807)

'Real Egyptian monuments, built of the hardest materials, cut out in the most prodigious blocks, even when they prove not the eye through the elegance of their shapes, still amaze the intellect through the immensity of their size, and the indestructibility of their nature. Modern imitations of those wonders of antiquity, composed of lath and plaster [...], offer no one attribute of solidity or grandeur to compensate for their lack of elegance and grace, and can only excite ridicule and contempt.'

36 In 1824, Thomas Willson proposed that instead of a garden cemetery, there should be 'The Pyramid. A general Metropolitan Cemetery to be Erected in the Vicinity of Primrose Hill'. This 'ornament to the metropolis' would cover 18 acres and have room for 5 million graves.

37 C. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865, repr. Harmondsworth 1985), 48.

38 *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, no. 912, 290.

39 J. Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga* (9 vols.; 1906, repr. Harmondsworth, 1951), i. 107.

40 C. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844, repr. Harmondsworth, 1986), 385.

41 C. Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985), 298.

At the funeral of old Jonas Chuzzlewit in Chapter 19 of Martin Chuzzlewit, 'two mutes were at the house-door, looking as mournful as could be reasonably expected of men with such a thriving job in hand'.

42 Letters of CD, iii. 454.

43 Undertakers' Review, 5 Feb. 1885, 8.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., 22 Oct. 1887, 151.

46 *From the Raven*, op. cit., 250.

47 Ibid., 249.

48 Undertakers' Review, 5 Feb. 1885, 8.

49 Ibid., 22. Oct 1887, 151.

50 Ibid.

51 C. Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985), 178-9.

52 Ibid.

53 Letters of AT, ii. 394.

The Funeral Reform Association hoped to 'co-operate with the [funeral] trade [...] instead of making funerals as melancholy a business as possible there should be something brighter and more in accordance with the hope that those whom they laid in the grave they would meet again in the future' (reported in *The Undertakers' Review*, 21 April 1886).

54 J. Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (1971), 68.

55 Middlemarch, 585.

56 Ibid., 587.

CHAPTER IV: COMMONPLACES

1 T. Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873, repr. Harmondsworth 1986), 240.

2 Letters of Newman, xxvii, 310.

3 Haight, vii. 103.

4 Ibid., 105.

5 Ibid., ix. 257.

6 Undertakers' Review, 5 Feb. 1885, 8.

7 George Lewes died on 30 November 1878, but Thomas Allbutt did not write and send his letter of condolence to the bereaved George Eliot until 19 January 1879:

My dear Mrs Lewes
It is not too late I trust, for me to add my single voice to the many which have sought to console you in your great bereavement.
Haight, vii. 96.

8 Christ Church, vol. 4, letter no. 83.

9 Letters of CD, vi. 725.

10 Letters of ALT, iii. 30.

11 W. Hakewill, *Modern Tombs* (1851), 7.

12 P. Sacks, *The English Elegy* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1985), 26.

13 Herbert F. Tucker, *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988) [hereafter referred to as Tucker], 381.

14 Letters of ALT, iii. 238.

15 R. Barthes, *s/z* (1970) trans. R. Miller (1974), 21.

16 Letters of ALT, ii. 289.

17 'Dear and Honoured Lady', 69.

18 Letters of ALT, iii. 250.

19 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (8 vols.; 1868), v. 38.

20 J. Conrad, *Nostromo* (1905, repr. Dent: Everyman's Library 1957), Part Second, 181.

21 W. Hakewill, *Modern Tombs* (1851), 5.

22 Letters of CD, ii. 394.

23 Ibid., i. 94.

24 Ibid., 515.

25 Ibid., 619 and CD i. 626.

26 Ibid., vi. 734.

27 Letters of ALT, ii. 297.

28 Ibid., 297.

29 Ibid., *fn.*

30 Letters of CD, i. 331 and 386.

31 Ibid., iii. 513.

32 Ibid., iv. 529.

33 Ibid., 202.

34 Ibid., 547.

35 Ibid., iv. 230.

36 Ibid., 232.

37 Ibid., vi. 49.

38 Ibid., 771.

39 Letters of ALT, ii. 114.

40 Letters of CD, iv. 275.

41 Ibid., vii. 599.

42 Ibid., vi. 734.

43 see Appendix B for the other letters with no formal start.

44 Letters of ALT, iii. 369.

45 'Dear and Honoured Lady', 68.

46 Ibid.

47 Haight, ix. 250.

48 J. H. Newman, 'Literature,' The Idea of a University (1899, repr. *The Essential Newman*, ed. C. F. Blehl (New York, 1963), 218.

49 Quoted in E. Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford, 1989), 36.

50 Kolb, 428.

51 *The Nonesuch Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. W. Dexter (3 vols.; 1936) [hereafter referred to as Nonesuch], iii. 730.

52 Kolb, 546.

Dickens had attempted to make a gesture in his letter to Washington Irving, dated 21 April 1841:

If you could know how earnestly I write this, you would be glad to read it — as I hope you will be faintly guessing at the warmth of the hand I autographically hold out to you, over the broad Atlantic. Letters of CD, ii. 267.

In his letter to Spencer Lyttelton (30 Mar. 1852), Dickens attempts a different gesture: 'This is not a note. It is merely a kind of posted wink of explanation'. Ibid., vi. 632

53 S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection* (7th edn, 1854), 1-2.

54 Letters of ALT, iii. 72.

55 Ibid., iii. 73.

56 T. Weymss Reid, op. cit., ii. 290.

57 Letters of Newman, xxvii. 306.

58 *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, ed. A. M. and A. B. Terhune (4 vols.; Princeton, 1980), i. 195.

59 Letters of ALT, 6.

60 Letters of CD, v. 505.

61 Letters of ALT, i. 94.

62 R., 94.

63 Letters of Newman, xxvi. 296.

64 Letters of ALT, ii. 264.

65 R., 95.

66 R., 381 *fn.*

67 Letters of ALT, ii. 394.

68 J. D. Rosenberg, *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 30, no. 3-4 [hereafter referred to as Rosenberg], 297.

69 R., 349.

70 T. Wemys Reid, op. cit., i. 40.

71 S. Shatto and M. Shaw (eds.), *In Memoriam* (Oxford, 1982).

72 Letters of ALT, i. 103.

73 Memoir, 91.

74 *Ninteenth Century*, xxxiii (1893), 182.

75 Ibid.

76 *Hamlet (The Arden Shakespeare), ed. H. Jenkins (1981), 183.*

77 Haight, ix. 257.

78 R., 350fn.

79 Shatto and Shaw, op. cit., 167.

80 H. F. Tucker, Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 382.

81 R., 351.

82 H. F. Tucker, op. cit., 378.

83 Ibid., 383.

84 J. Rosenberg, op. cit., 293.

85 E. Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford, 1989), 124.

86 Memoir, 255.

87 Letters of ALT, i. 93.

88 *Poetry of the Landscape and the Night*, ed. C. Peake (1967), 84.

89 *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, ed. R. Lonsdale (Oxford, 1984).

90 J. Rosenberg, op. cit., 295.

91 B. McMullen and J. R. Kinkaid, '*Tennyson*, Hallam's Corpse, Milton's Murder, and Poetic Exhibitionism', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, no. 45, 176.

92 J. Rosenberg, op. cit., 179.

93 P. Sacks, op. cit., 168.

CHAPTER V: HESITATING TO APPROACH

1 L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth Century Rhetoric* (1968),

2 Nonesuch, iii. 527.

3 *David Copperfield*, op. cit., 177.

4 Christ Church, vol. 15, letter 203.

5 *The Habits of Good Society* (anonymous, undated, ?pubd. 1880's), 293.

6 Letters of CD, i. 256.

7 Ibid., 343.

8 Haight, ix. 250.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 260.

11 Ibid., 269.

12 Ibid., 258.

13 D. A. Wilson and D. Wilson MacArthur, *Carlyle in Old Age* (1934), 85.

14 E. Lindemann, op. cit., 12.

15 Letters of EFG, ii. 503.

16 Letters of Newman, xxvii. 312.

17 Ibid., 310.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 309.

20 Ibid., 324.

21 Ibid., 327.

22 Haight, vii. 95.

23 Christ Church, vol. 6, letter 110.

24 Ibid., vol. 15, letter 178.

25 Ibid., vol. 6, letter 119.

26 Ibid., vol. 1, letter 176.

27 Ibid., vol. 15, letter 185.

28 Letters of CD, vi. 734.

29 Christ Church, vol. 1, letter 176.

30 Nonesuch, iii. 285.

31 Christ Church, vol. 15, letter 203.

32 Ibid., vol. 15, letter 108.

33 Haight, ix. 257.

34 S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection* (7th edn, 1854), 1-2.

35 'Dear and Honoured Lady', 68.

Tennyson often drove away intruders from his house at Farringford on the Isle of Wight. He sought to deter sight-seers by raising, around his house, a great mound of earth planted with trees. In 1867, feeling beseiged by sight-seers, especially in the summer months, Tennyson purchased land for a house at an isolated spot, although near London, at Haslemere.

36 Memoir, 554.

37 Ibid., 773.

38 Ibid., 775.

39 C. Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (1949), 532.

40 Letters of EFG, ii. 51.

41 R., (3 vols.), ii. 297.

42 Memoir, 826.

43 Ibid.

44 Letters of ALT, iii. 271.

45 Tennyson, in a letter to F. T. Palgrave, dated 24 Dec. 1868, Letters of ALT, ii. 510-11. Tennyson writes: 'You distress me when you tell me that, without leave given by me, you showed my poem to Max Muller: not that I care about Max Mulller's seeing it, but I do care for your not considering it a sacred deposit. Pray do so in future [...]'.

46 Memoir, 467.

47 Ibid., 826.

48 *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. H. Tristram (1956), 25.

49 Memoir, vii.

50 Ibid., xi.

51 Letters of EFG, i. 51.

52 R., (3 vols.,) ii.

53 Christ Church, vol. 15, letter 172.

54 Letters of ALT, ii. 272.

55 Ibid., ii. 289.

56 Memoir, 855.

57 Letters of ALT, ii. 548.

58 R., 155, ll. 92-3.

59 R. C. Trench, *On the Study of Words* (1851, 17th, rev. edn., 1878), 119.

60 J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1868), v. 33.

61 Memoir, 490.

62 Kolb, 467.

63 Memoir, 398.

64 Ibid,, 201.

65 Letters of ALT, ii. 117.

66 G. Hill, 'Poetry as "Menace" and "Atonement"', in *The Lords of Limit* (1984), 7.

67 Letters of ALT, ii. 117.

Tennyson's fighting stance was maintained until the end. When Hubert Parry visited Tennyson at Farringford in January 1892, he remembered how Tennyson 'immediately fell foul of me for using the slang word "awfully". We had a passage of arms and I confessed that I did not put much guard on my tongue, but used words in familiar use and familiarly understood. He growled out: "I'd sooner you said bloody", but was good-humoured in the end, though he often attacked me laughingly again on the same score.' Letters of ALT, iii. 436.

68 Letters of ALT, iii. 30.

69 Letters of CD, v. 626.

70 Ibid., 627.

71 Ibid., iv. 112.

72 S. T. Coleridge, *Literary Remains, ed. N. Coleridge* (1836), 235.

73 Letters of CD, iv. 656.

74 Ibid., i. 97.

75 Ibid., v. 626.

76 Letters of ALT, i.

77 Letters of ALT, i. 93.

CHAPTER VI: VAIN WORDS

1 C, Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985), 652.

2 C. M. Parkes, *Bereavement*, op. cit., 55.

3 E. Lindemaan, *Symptomology of Grief* (1944), 2.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 4.

6 Letters of Newman, xxvi. 306.

7 Quoted in Letters of CD, ii. 285 fn.

8 *Letters of Cicero*, trans. L. P. Wilkinson (1949, 2nd edn., 1966), 140-2.

9 Letters of ALT, ii. 94.

10 Haight, ix. 250.

11 R. H. Hutton, *Literary Essays* (1871, 3rd enlarged edn., 1888), 364.

12 R., iii. 398, ll. 455-60.

13 R., 365.

14 Haight, ix. 58.

15 R., 165.

16 R. H. Hutton, op. cit., 373.

17 E. Lindemaan, op., cit.

18 R., 394.

19 E. Lindemann, op. cit.

20 Letters of ALT, i. 93.

21 Christ Church, vol. 15, letter no. 185.

22 'Dear and Honoured Lady, 104.

23 *The Old Curiosity Shop*, op. cit., 660.

24 Letters of ALT, i. 93.

25 C. M. Parkes, op. cit., 99.

26 S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, op. cit. 243.

27 Ibid., 244.

28 C. M. Parkes and Weiss, *Recovery from Bereavement* (New York, 1983), 157.

29 S. Weintraub, *Victoria, Biography of a Queen*, (1987), 317.

30 *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire (5 vols.; Oxford, 1940-) ii. 513.

31 Ibid., 512.

32 J. Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss* (3 vols.; 1973), iii. 14, quoting from A. Freud and D. Burlingham, *Infants Without Families* (1944).

33 P. Sacks, op. cit., 327.

34 J. Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (1907, repr. Harmondsworth, 1985), 215.

35 D. A. Wilson and D. Wilson MacArthur, *Carlyle in Old Age* (1934), 35.

36 *David Copperfield*, op. cit., 184.

37 Haight, vii. 87.

38 Ibid., 90.

39 Ibid., 93.

40 Ibid., 86.

41 Letters of ALT, iii. 166.

42 J. A. Ross, Three Generations of English Women, (1893), 418.

43 Letters of ALT, iii. 6.

44 Ibid., i. 93.

45 Letters of Newman, xxvi. 296.

46 Letters of ALT, ii. 264.

47 S. Weintraub, 317.

48 D. A. Wilson and D. Wilson MacArthur, *Carlyle in Old Age* (1934), 35.

49 Haight, vii. 96.

50 Letters of ALT, iii. 73.

51 Haight, ix. 249.

52 J. Bayley, 'Tennyson and the Idea of Decadence', in *Studies in Tennyson*, ed. H. Tennyson (1981), 204.

53 Letters of Newman, i. 50.

54 Haight, vii. 84.

55 *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, ed. C. R. Sanders, Kenneth J. Fielding and C. de L. Ryals (24 vols.; 1970 in progress)

56 Letters of Newman, xxvii. 305.

57 Hamlet (The Arden Shakespeare), ed. H. Jenkins (1981), 183 *fn.*

58 L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric* (1968), 191.

59 T. Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (2 vols.; 1881). ed. C. E. Norton (1887), repr. 1 vol., edn. I. Campbell (1972), 167.

60 Haight, ix. 244.

61 *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, ed. E. A. Abbott and L. Campbell (2 vols.; 1899), ii. 357.

62 Haight, vii. 87.

63 Letters of ALT, iii. 30.

64 Letters of CD, v. 505.

65 R, 344.

66 R. Barthes, *s/z* (1970) trans. R. Miller (1974), 21.

67 Letters of ALT, ii. 264.

68 Ibid. iii. 250.

69 Haight, vi. 85.

70 Christ Church, vol. 4, letter no. 83.

71 Ibid.

72 Letters of CD, i. 515.

73 Letters of Newman, xxvii. 310.

74 Haight, ix. 246.

75 Letters of ALT, ii. 94.

76 See Appendix A.

77 Letters of CD, vi. 734.

78 Ibid., 771.

79 Ibid., i. 94.

80 Ibid., 506.

81 Ibid., vii. 648.

82 Ibid., i. 516.

83 Ibid., 384.

84 Ibid., i. 619.

85 Ibid., vii. 648.

86 Ibid., vi. 515.

87 Ibid., i, 619.

88 'Dear and Honoured Lady', 126.

89 Quoted in R. B. Martin, *The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford 1980), 557.

90 R., 661.

91 Letters of CD, vi. 354.

92 Nonesuch, ii. 160.

93 Letters of CD, vi. 154.

94 Ibid., 563.

95 Ibid., iii. 407.

96 Ibid., iv. 22.

97 Ibid., v. 502.

98 Letters of CD, iv. 57.

99 Ibid., vii. 453.

100 Ibid., 747.

101 Nonesuch, ii. 659.

102 Ibid., 613.

103 Ibid., vi. 616.

104 Nonesuch, ii. 726.

105 Letters of CD, iv. 638.

106 S. Johnson, *The pains of composition*, from *Adventurer*, repr. *Samuel Johnson: Selected Writings*, ed. R. T. Davies (1965), 150.

108 to Leigh Hunt, 4 May 1855, Nonesuch, ii. 443.

109 Letters of CD, vi. 816.

110 J. Forster, *Life of Dickens* (3 vols.; 1872, repr. 1 vol. 1892).

111 Letters of CD, ii. 411.

112 Ibid., ii. 198.

113 Nonesuch, iii. 438.

114 Letters of CD, vii. 704.

115 Ibid., iv. 622.

116 Ibid., vii. 754.

117 Ibid., iv. 207.

118 Nonesuch, ii. 838.

119 Ibid., 873.

120 Letters of CD, iv. 207.

121 *Dickens, Interviews and Recollections*, ed. P. Collins (2 vols.; 1981), ii. 195.

122 Letters of CD, v. 437.

123 Ibid., iv. 602.

124 Ibid., v. 440.

125 Nonesuch, ii. 658.

126 Ibid., 602.

127 Ibid., vi. 153.

128 Ibid., v. 272.

129 Ibid., vi. 195.

130 *David Copperfield*, op. cit., 45.

131 Ibid., vi. 656.

132 Ibid., iii. 57 fn.

133, R., iii. 156.

134 Letters of CD, vi. 353.

135 Ibid., 354 fn.

136 Ibid., 356.

137 Ibid., 360.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid., 355.

140 Ibid., 356.

141 Ibid., 357.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid., 358.

144 Ibid., 359.

145 Ibid. 343 fn., quoting *Charles Dickens at Home, by His Eldest Daughter*, in *Cornhill*, Jan. 1885, N, S, iv. 38.

146 Ibid., 353.

147 Ibid., 352.

148 Ibid., 354

149 Ibid., 343.

150 Ibid., 354.

151 Ibid., 355.

152 Ibid., 25.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid., 244.

155 C. Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839, rep. Harmondsworth, 1978), 204.

156 Nonesuch, iii. 370.

157 Ibid.

CHAPTER VII: SOURCES OF CONSOLATION

1 Letters of CD, i, 94.

2 Ibid., 515.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 515.

5 Ibid., 515-6.

6 J. Forster, *Life of Dickens*, (3 vols.; 1872, repr 1 vol.; 1892), 52.

7 Letters of CD, ii. 409.

8 Ibid., i. 515.

9 Ibid., v. 505.

10 Ibid., ii. 408.

11 Ibid., i. 620.

12 *The Old Curiosity Shop*, op. cit., 659.

13 R. H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age* (1844), I, 67.

14 Letters of CD, iii. 656.

15 Ibid., ii. 185.

16 Ibid., 181-2.

17 Ibid., i. 384.

18 Ibid., v. 505.

19 Ibid., i. 619.

20 A. Huxley, *Vulgarity in Literature* (1930), 59.

21 Letters of CD, ii. 286 fn.

22 J. Forster, op. cit., 93.

23 *The Diaries of William Macready* (1912), ii. 116.

24 Letters of CD, ii. 286.

25 Ibid., *fn.*

26 Nonesuch, ii. 102-3.

27 Letters of CD, i. 165.

28 R., 396.

29 Letters of CD, vi. 49.

30 Ibid., v. 506.

31 Ibid., 482.

32 Ibid., 506.

33 Ibid., i. 619.

34 Ibid., 506.

35 Ibid., ii. 393.

36 Ibid., ii. 408.

37 Ibid., v. 506.

38 Ibid., i. 620.

39 Ibid., i. 516.

40 Ibid., ii. 432. Dickens' words were not used.

41 Ibid., i. 515-6.

42 Ibid., 619.

44 Ibid., v. 482.

45 Ibid., ii. 408.

46 Ibid., vii. 599.

47 Ibid.

48 Letters of Newman, xxvi. 296.

49 Nonesuch, iii. 548.

50 R., 375.

51 Letters of ALT, ii. 264.

53 Ibid., iii. 73.

54 Ibid., iii. 287.

55 Letters of CD, vi. 734.

56 Ibid., iv. 246.

57 Ibid., v. 482.

58 Ibid., vi. 275.

59 Ibid., vii. 599.

60 Letters of ALT, ii. 289.

61 Ibid., i. 94.

62 Ibid., ii. 82.

63 Ibid., iii. 6.

64 Ibid., i. 94.

65 R., 94.

66 Ibid., 95.

67 P. Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles*, (1978), 167.

68 C. Ricks, *Tennyson* (1972, 2nd. edn. 1981), 98.

69 Letters of ALT, ii. 297.

70 R., 441.

Dickens refers to Fielding's work, in two other letters of condolence:

1) to Basil Hall (26 May 1841): 'The traveller from this World to the next, found the Infant Child he had lost many years before, wreathing him a bower in Heaven'.
2) to Mrs Winter (13 June 1855):

In a book by one of the greatest English writers, called A Journey from this World to the next, a parent comes to the distant country beyond the grave, and finds the little girl he had lost so long ago, engaged in building a bower to receive him in, when his aged steps should bring him there at last. He is filled with joy to see her – so young — so bright — so full of promise — and is enraptured to think that she never was old, wan, tearful, withered.

CHAPTER VIII: ENDINGS

1. Kolb, 418.

2 J. Forster, op. cit., 671.

3 Ibid., 668.

4 Letters of ALT, ii. 279.

5 Memoir, 777.

6 Ibid., 778.

7 Quoted in R. B. Martin, *The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford, 1980).

8 Memoir, 778.

9 *The Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. M. Millgate (7 vols.; 1978), i. 187.

10 Ibid.

11 Memoir, 778.

12 R. H. Hutton, *Literary Essays* (1896), 372.

13 'Dear and Honoured Lady', 67.

14 Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, (2 vols.; 1899), ii. 271.

15 Ibid., 323.

16 Ibid., 463.

17 Ibid., 459.

18 K. Berridge, *The Sunday Telegraph (Review)*, 30 July 1995, 14.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

APPENDIX A

1 J. Forster, op. cit., 52.

2 Letters of CD, iii. 211.

3 Ibid., 483.

4 J. Forster, 415.

5 Ibid.

6 Letters of CD, vi. 736.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., vi. 764.

10 J. Forster, op. cit., 540.

11 Ibid., 665-6.

APPENDIX B

1 Memoir, 367.

2 *Emily Tennyson's Journal*, ed. J. O. Hoge (Virginia, 1981), 220.

3 R. B. Martin, *The Unquiet Heart* (Oxford, 1980), 465.

4 Memoir, 499.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 637.

7 Ibid., 648.

8 C. Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (1949), 532.

9 R. B. Martin, op. cit., 548.

10 Memoir, 728.

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